ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness Worksheets: Free Exercises to Build Skills

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Assertiveness worksheets are written exercises that help you practice saying what you need, clearly and respectfully, before you have to do it for real. This page has a full set in five modules: your communication style, the assertive mindset, core scripts, advanced skills, and keeping your progress. Work through them in order, about one module a week.

Assertiveness worksheets work differently than an article or a book. They don't just explain the concept. They make you practice it. And practice is the only thing that actually changes how you communicate. You can read about assertiveness for years without becoming more assertive. But if you work through structured exercises consistently for a few weeks, your default responses start to shift in ways that surprise you. These assertiveness worksheets start with how you communicate now and build toward holding a boundary out loud when it counts.

This page gives you a complete set of assertiveness worksheets you can work through at your own pace. The exercises build on each other, so going in order matters. Each section targets a specific skill, and the skills stack. By the end, you'll have a toolkit for situations that used to leave you silent, resentful, or apologizing when you had nothing to apologize for. For the broader framework on assertiveness (/assertiveness/) as a communication style, start there. This workbook is about the doing.

Before you start these assertiveness worksheets: know your baseline

The exercises in this assertiveness workbook will be most useful if you know where you're starting from. Take five minutes and answer these questions honestly. Write your answers down.

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how assertive are you at work?
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how assertive are you in your closest relationship?
3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how assertive are you with family?
4. What's the last situation where you wished you had spoken up but didn't?
5. What's the last situation where you spoke up and felt good about how you handled it?

Most people find their numbers vary dramatically depending on the context. You might be a 7 at work and a 3 with your parents. That's normal and useful information. It tells you where to focus your practice.

For a more detailed assessment, the Assertiveness Assessment (/quiz/assertiveness/) gives you a scored baseline you can revisit after completing the workbook.

Module 1: Identify your assertive communication style

Before you can be more assertive, you need to see clearly how you currently communicate. This module helps you recognize the four communication styles in your own behavior.

Exercise 1.1: Style recognition

For each scenario, write out what you would actually say (not what you think you should say). Be honest.

Scenario A: You ordered a meal at a restaurant. It arrives cold.

Scenario B: Your friend is chronically 20 minutes late to everything.

Scenario C: Your boss asks you to work over the weekend on short notice.

Scenario D: Your partner makes a decision that affects both of you without consulting you.

Now look at your responses and categorize each one:

- **Passive:** You don't address the issue, minimize it, or make excuses for the other person.
- **Aggressive:** You attack, blame, or use hostile language.
- **Passive aggressive:** You hint at the problem without stating it directly, use sarcasm, or agree but act out your frustration through behavior.
- **Assertive:** You clearly state the issue, how it affects you, and what you'd like instead, while remaining respectful.



Most people find that they use different styles in different contexts. The goal isn't to be assertive 100% of the time. It's to have assertiveness available as an option when you need it.

Exercise 1.2: Your personal triggers

List five situations where you consistently fail to be assertive. Be specific. Not "at work" but "when Sarah asks me to cover her responsibilities at work." Not "with my mom" but "when my mom criticizes how I'm raising my kids."

For each situation, write down:

- What I usually do (the passive, aggressive, or passive aggressive response)
- What I'm afraid will happen if I'm assertive
- What actually happened last time I stayed quiet

This exercise often reveals that the feared consequences of assertiveness are vague ("they'll be mad") while the actual consequences of staying quiet are specific and painful ("I spent the entire weekend doing her work and missed my son's game").

Module 2: Building the assertive mindset

Skills without the right mindset don't stick. These exercises address the beliefs that keep you stuck.

Exercise 2.1: Assertive rights inventory

Below is a list of assertive rights. Read each one and rate how much you believe it on a scale of 1 (I don't believe this at all) to 5 (I fully believe this).

- I have the right to say no without feeling guilty.
- I have the right to express my feelings.
- I have the right to change my mind.
- I have the right to make mistakes.
- I have the right to ask for what I want.
- I have the right to disagree.
- I have the right to not be responsible for other people's feelings.
- I have the right to set priorities for my own time.
- I have the right to be treated with respect.
- I have the right to not explain or justify my decisions.

Any item you rated 3 or below is a belief that's actively undermining your assertiveness. Write each low-rated right on a separate piece of paper or note card. For the next two weeks, read

through them every morning. This isn't magic. It's cognitive rehearsal, a well-established technique in cognitive behavioral therapy.

Exercise 2.2: The worst case audit

Take your five trigger situations from Exercise 1.2. For each one, answer:

1. What's the absolute worst thing that could happen if I spoke up?
2. How likely is that worst case (percentage)?
3. What's the most likely outcome if I spoke up?
4. Could I handle the worst case if it actually happened?

Most people discover that the worst case is something like "they'd be annoyed for a few hours" and the likelihood is far lower than their anxiety suggests. The most likely outcome is usually a short, uncomfortable conversation followed by the issue actually getting resolved.

This exercise is adapted from CBT's cognitive restructuring technique. It works because anxiety distorts probability. Writing it out forces your rational brain to weigh in.

Module 3: Core assertiveness scripts

Now you have the practice material. These exercises give you specific language to use in common situations.

Exercise 3.1: The basic assertion formula

Learn this structure. It's the foundation for everything else.

"When [specific behavior], I feel [emotion], because [reason]. I'd like [specific request]."

Practice by writing out a complete statement for each of your five trigger situations. Then say each one out loud three times. Yes, actually out loud. Your voice needs to practice as much as your brain.

Example: “When meetings get scheduled during my lunch break without asking, I feel frustrated because I need that time to recharge. I’d like us to check availability before booking midday meetings.”

If this formula is the part you keep getting wrong, there is a whole page of drills on this one sentence (/assertiveness/i-statements-worksheet/) covering the fake feeling word, the missing request, and the hedging that undercuts both.

Exercise 3.2: The “No” ladder

This is a progressive exposure exercise. You’ll practice saying no in increasingly difficult situations, starting with the easiest.

Rung 1 (this week): Say no to one small request that doesn’t matter much. A store loyalty card signup. A telemarketer. An optional survey. Just practice the word.

Rung 2 (next week): Say no to an acquaintance or low-stakes social situation. Decline an invitation you don’t want to attend. Say “no thanks” to a coworker’s request to cover something minor.

Rung 3 (week three): Say no in a situation that triggers mild anxiety. Push back on a meeting time. Decline a family request. Return a meal at a restaurant.

Rung 4 (week four): Say no in a situation that triggers significant anxiety. Negotiate a deadline with your boss. Decline a favor for a close friend. Set a boundary with a family member.

After each “no,” write down: What I said. What happened. How I felt. What I expected vs. what actually happened.

The gap between expected and actual outcomes is where your confidence grows. It’s almost always smaller than you feared.

Exercise 3.3: The broken record technique

This exercise prepares you for people who don’t accept your first no. The technique: calmly repeat your position without escalating, explaining further, or giving in.

Pick one of your trigger situations and write out a dialogue where the other person pushes back three times and you hold your ground each time. Use different words if you want, but keep the core message the same.

You: "I'm not able to take that on right now." **Them:** "But it would really help the team." **You:** "I understand. I'm not able to take it on right now." **Them:** "Can't you just do this one thing?" **You:** "I appreciate you asking. My plate is full, and I need to prioritize what I've already committed to."

Notice: no apology, no lengthy justification, no anger. Just a calm, consistent boundary. Practice this dialogue out loud until the words feel natural.

For more on how assertiveness training (/assertiveness/training/) works as a broader skill-building approach, that guide covers additional methods and programs.

Module 4: Advanced assertiveness skills

Once you're comfortable with the basics, these exercises build the nuance.

Exercise 4.1: Assertive empathy

Sometimes assertiveness requires acknowledging the other person's position before stating your own. This doesn't weaken your boundary. It strengthens it by showing that you understand their perspective and still have a different need.

Practice writing "empathy-first" assertions for these situations:

- A friend asks for a loan and you want to say no.
- Your manager assigns you extra work during an already busy period.
- Your partner wants to spend the holiday with their family and you want something different.

Template: "I understand that [their need/perspective], and [your position/need]."

Example: "I understand that you're in a tough spot financially, and I'm not in a position to lend money right now. I hope you find a solution."

Exercise 4.2: Receiving criticism assertively

Assertiveness isn't just about expressing yourself. It's also about how you receive difficult feedback. Many people either crumble (passive) or counterattack (aggressive) when criticized.

Write out assertive responses to these criticisms:

- "You're always late."
- "This report needs a lot of work."
- "You're being selfish."
- "I'm disappointed in you."

An assertive response to criticism does three things: acknowledges any valid part, rejects any unfair part, and stays calm. Example: "I hear that the report needs more work. Can you tell me specifically what needs to change? I want to get it right."

Exercise 4.3: Assertiveness in real time

For one full week, carry a small notebook or use a notes app. Every time you're in a situation where assertiveness is relevant, write a brief entry within an hour:

- Situation (one sentence)
- What I did
- What I wish I had done (if different)
- What I'll try next time

This real-time tracking accelerates progress because you're closing the gap between the exercises and your actual life. The workbook on paper is practice. This exercise is game time.

Module 5: Maintaining your progress

Assertiveness isn't a destination. It's a practice that needs maintenance.

Exercise 5.1: The monthly check-in

At the end of each month, answer these questions:

1. What assertiveness wins did I have this month?
2. Where did I fall back into old patterns?
3. What's one assertiveness goal for next month?
4. Have my baseline scores (from the beginning of this workbook) changed?

Exercise 5.2: The accountability system

Assertiveness develops faster with accountability. Identify one person who supports your growth: a therapist, a friend who's working on similar things, or a partner who understands your goals. Share your weekly progress with them. Not for approval, but for accountability.

If you don't have someone, consider joining an online community focused on boundary work and assertiveness. The shared experience normalizes the struggle and provides motivation on the days when reverting to old patterns feels easier.

The Scripts Generator (/scripts/) pairs well with these exercises, giving you ready-made phrasing for specific relationships and situations to rehearse before the real conversation.

Common obstacles (and what to do about them)

"I freeze in the moment." This is the most common complaint. The solution is over-preparation. Practice your scripts until they're automatic. When you freeze, your conscious mind goes offline. But practiced responses live in a different part of the brain and can still fire even when you're anxious.

"I tried being assertive and it went badly." Examine what "badly" means. Did the person react negatively? That's normal. People who benefit from your passivity will push back when you change. Did you come across as aggressive instead of assertive? Review the scripts and try again with more empathy-first language. One bad experience isn't evidence that assertiveness doesn't work.

"I can do it with strangers but not with people who matter." This is extremely common because the stakes are higher with people you love. The good news is that the skills transfer. The confidence you build with strangers creates a foundation for the harder conversations. Keep climbing the ladder.

"My culture values indirectness." Assertiveness doesn't mean abandoning your cultural values. It means having the option to be direct when it matters. You can be culturally sensitive and still express your needs. The key is finding language that feels authentic to you, not copying someone else's style.

If the connection between assertiveness and healthy boundaries (/boundaries/at-work/) resonates, or if you're curious how codependency (/codependency/signs/) might be affecting your communication patterns, those guides explore those intersections.

Frequently asked questions

How long should it take to complete this assertiveness workbook?

Plan for six to eight weeks at a comfortable pace. Each module needs at least a week of active practice to produce real change. Rushing through the exercises as a reading activity defeats the purpose. The workbook works because it involves repetition and real-world application, both of which take time. Some people cycle through the entire workbook multiple times, and that's perfectly fine. Each round builds on the last.

Can I use this workbook alongside therapy?

Absolutely. Many therapists appreciate when clients bring structured exercises to complement their sessions. The workbook gives you material to practice between appointments, and your therapist can help you process the emotions that come up during practice. If you're working with a CBT therapist in particular, these exercises align closely with the approaches they likely already use.

What if my assertiveness makes someone leave the relationship?

If someone exits your life because you started communicating honestly and setting reasonable boundaries, that tells you something important about the relationship. Healthy relationships can absorb assertiveness. Unhealthy ones often can't. Losing a relationship that only worked because you were self-abandoning is painful in the short term but healthy in the long term. The relationships that remain after you become assertive are the ones built on mutual respect.

More worksheets and workbooks

If this workbook helped, the shorter practice pages here work the same way, one skill at a time:

- People pleasing worksheet (/people-pleasing/worksheet/): catch the yes-when-you-mean-no habit and trace where it started.
- Setting boundaries worksheet (/boundaries/worksheets/): name your real limits and plan the conversation that protects them.
- Codependency worksheets (/codependency/worksheets/): sort out whose feelings are whose and where you end.
- Saying no worksheet (/saying-no/worksheets/): break the automatic yes and build a no you can actually say.

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