

Assertiveness

Key stage 2

Learning Intention:

- To understand and be able to use assertiveness skills.

Learning Outcome:

- To have practised being assertive in different situations.

Resources:

- Paper, pens, crayons.

Teacher Introduction:

Start by saying: Assertiveness is a key skill needed in relationships, and in everyday life. Being assertive is not being angry or shouting. By understanding what assertiveness means and by being able to practise assertiveness in our classroom, where it is safe, we will be able to learn how to be assertive in everyday life.

Activity 1:

Discuss with the children what assertiveness means. A good definition is “being able to communicate our thoughts, beliefs, opinions and emotions in a positive and confident way”. Agree on a definition and explore how it is different from shouting and angry insistence.

Also useful for: CF, RR, MW

Activity 2:

In pairs, ask the children to think of situations when they have been asked to do something they did not want to do (if they cannot think of one, ask them to consider a situation that a friend has been in, or one they have seen or heard about.) Steer the class towards safe examples, such as “your friend wanted you to watch a TV programme you’re not allowed to see,” as this activity may otherwise be distressing for children who have experienced abuse or coercion.

Ask the class to describe the situations they have thought of, and scribe the responses. In small groups ask each group to choose a situation from the list, and think of ways that they could say ‘no’ . List all the different ways that each group comes up with.

In pairs, ask the children to role-play some of their solutions to their chosen situation, with one person acting as persuader and the other using the suggested strategy. A useful prompt is “No, I don’t want to because...”

When both children have practiced being the persuader and the respondent, let them choose another scenario and repeat the exercise with the children swapping roles.

Bring the group back together and ask the children:

- How did it feel to be the persuader?
- How did you deal with rejection when the other child said no?
- How did it feel being the responder?
- What strategy did you use to deal with the pressure?
- What made your strategy a good one?
- How could it have been better?

Also useful for: CF, RR, BS, OR

Activity 3:

Explain to the children that there are 3 different types of behaviour people might use when trying to deal with pressure:

- Aggressive behaviour (angry, threatening or hurtful)
- Assertive behaviour (calm, strong, confident)
- Passive behaviour (not saying what we mean, letting other people do what they want)

Ask the children what they think these words mean, and help them to arrive at suitable definitions (suggestions are shown in brackets above). Ask if they can think of an example of each, taking their ideas from stories, soap operas and films. Discuss the characteristics of assertive behaviour.

Give each child a piece of paper and ask them to write down examples of both verbal and nonverbal assertiveness skills. Suggested responses are:

Verbal assertiveness skills	Non-verbal assertiveness skills
Not shouting	Listening to the other person
Using words to describe your feelings	Keeping your body still
Repeating what you want	Not jabbing your fingers or waving your arms
Being clear about what you want	Standing or sitting up straight

Ask the children in pairs to practise a different scenario from activity 2, this time using as many of the verbal or non-verbal skills as they can. Repeat the persuader/resister roles, ensuring both children experience each role.

Ask the children:

- Was it easier to remain firm when they were using the assertiveness skills discussed? Why?
- Did the persuader notice any difference this time, and if so, what?
- Did the resisting child's body language back up what they were saying? If not, what could have been better?

Also useful for: CF, RR, BS

Activity 4:

Ask the children in groups to design a top tips poster explaining 'How to be Assertive.' Display the finished posters around the school.

Also useful for: CF, RR, BS

Plenary:

Remind the children what they have learnt:

- What assertiveness means.
- The verbal and non-verbal skills needed to be assertive.
- The difference between assertiveness and aggression.

Debriefing activity:

Remind the children that they will need assertiveness skills as they grow up, as they will need to be able to resist pressure and stick to doing what they think is right. This is one of the responsibilities we take on as we get older. Remind them that they are growing up and that they are all learning good and useful skills which will help them throughout their lives. Allow a minute's quiet reflection on the lesson then move on to the next part of the day.

Differentiation for SEND:

It can be difficult for disabled children to demonstrate assertiveness, particularly when they have problems with mobility or independence skills. Parents who are accustomed to providing all aspects of their child's care may also find it hard to accept his or her growing desire for independence and autonomy. It will be important to work with parents and carers so they are prepared for this stage in their child's life. The sample letters in this SoW can be adapted to give specific information and support to these families.

Children with autistic spectrum disorders may find it hard to read and interpret emotions, and so extra support may be necessary for this group. Giving these children very clear examples and reminders (such as a set of labelled picture cards showing emotions and appropriate body language) so they can have a point of reference when discussing abstract concepts such as feelings can be helpful. School SENCOs and the educational psychology service will be able to provide further advice.

