



# Create the Conditions

## Module 7:

### **Assertive Conversations.**

**Theme:** Balancing clear self-expression with understanding others' perspectives to foster respectful and effective communication.

## 01

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(1 min)

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# Introduction and Learning Objectives

Assertive communication involves expressing your thoughts, feelings, and needs openly and honestly while respecting others. Empathy allows us to understand and acknowledge the feelings and perspectives of others. Combining assertiveness with empathy leads to mutual respect, reduced conflicts, and stronger relationships. When working with young people, modelling assertive and empathetic communication teaches young people how to express themselves confidently and compassionately. This is critical learning that will enhance both our personal and professional lives.

**By the end of this module, you will:**

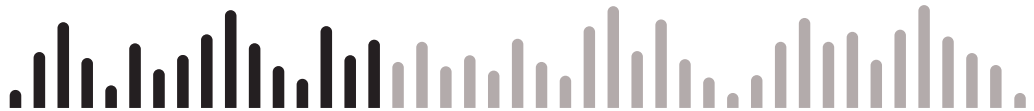
- 1. Understand** the differences between passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive communication styles.
- 2. Learn** how to express your needs and feelings clearly without infringing on others' rights.
- 3. Develop** skills to listen actively and respond empathetically during conversations.
- 4. Practice** techniques to navigate difficult discussions with a calm assertiveness.

# 02

(5 min)

## Guided Visualisation

This visualisation will help you imagine the balance between expressing your own needs and understanding those of others. As you engage with this exercise, consider how achieving this balance can enhance your interactions.



# 03

(20 min)

## Reflective Journaling & Self-Inquiry

Continuing on from the visualisation, take 20 minutes to journal your thoughts. There are no right or wrong answers, this is your personal reflection space to engage with the prompts as deeply as you are able.

### Journal Prompts:

**Reflect on a recent conversation where you felt unheard or where your needs were unmet.**

- a. How did you express yourself?
- b. What was the outcome?

**Identify any fears or beliefs that hinder you from speaking assertively.**

- a. Are you concerned about conflict or rejection?
- b. How do these fears impact your communication?

**Envision a scenario where you successfully balance assertiveness and empathy.**

- a. What does this look like for you?
- b. How do you think this is received by them?

## **Trauma-Informed Reminder**

Balancing assertiveness alongside empathy is a skill developed over time. Be patient with yourself as you practice new ways of communicating.

# 04

(20 min)

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## **Interactive Activity: Role-Playing Assertive and Empathetic Conversations**

This activity provides an opportunity to practice combining assertiveness with empathy in a safe environment with yourself.

**Instructions:**

- Use a mirror or record yourself. Alternatively, If you have a colleague you want to practice with, this could also work.
- Choose one challenging scenario currently relevant to your work or personal life, for example: addressing a colleague who interrupts you frequently.
- Role-play the conversation, focusing on:
  - a.** Clearly stating your perspective using I statements. Eg: "I've noticed that when I'm speaking in meetings, I sometimes get interrupted before I can finish my point. I feel frustrated when this happens because I want to contribute fully to the discussion."
  - b.** Acknowledging the other person's feelings and viewpoint. Eg: "I understand that you're passionate about sharing ideas, and I really value your input. I also know that in fast-paced conversations, it can be easy to jump in without realising it."
  - c.** Maintaining a calm and respectful tone. After recording the conversation,listen to it with your eyes closed. Reflect: How would you find someone talking to you in this exact tone? Is there anything you want to change?
  - d.** Seeking a mutually beneficial resolution. Eg: "Would you be open to us bothmaking a conscious effort to let each other finish speaking before res ponding? That way, we can ensure everyone's ideas are fully heard."

This approach expresses your needs clearly, validates the other person's perspective, and suggests a solution that could benefit both parties. When we can communicate assertively we have no need to be angry or resentful. We are able to clearly express our needs in a way that invites positive dialogue. Understanding different communication styles helps us navigate conversations effectively and foster healthier relationships.

Here's a concise breakdown of the **four main styles**:

### **Passive Communication:**

Avoiding conflict by not expressing needs, opinions, or feelings directly.

**Key Traits:** Soft voice, avoiding eye contact, difficulty saying "no," allowing others to take advantage. Example: "It's okay, don't worry about it," (even when upset). **Impact:** Builds resentment, leads to feeling unheard or unimportant.

### **Aggressive Communication:**

Expressing needs or opinions in a forceful, dominating way that disregards others.

**Key Traits:** Loud voice, interrupting, blaming, demanding, using intimidation. Example: "You never listen to me! You're so inconsiderate!" **Impact:** Damages relationships, causes fear or resistance in others.

### **Passive-Aggressive Communication:**

Expressing frustration indirectly through sarcasm, silent treatment, or backhanded remarks.

**Key Traits:** Avoiding direct confrontation, making sarcastic comments, giving mixed signals. Example: "Oh sure, I'll do all the work—like always." **Impact:** Creates confusion, resentment, and unresolved tension.

### **Assertive Communication:**

Expressing thoughts, needs, and feelings clearly, respectfully, and confidently while considering others.

**Key Traits:** Calm tone, "I" statements, active listening, setting boundaries. Example: "I feel frustrated when I'm interrupted because I want to share my ideas. Can we take turns speaking?" **Impact:** Builds trust, strengthens relationships, and encourages open dialogue.



### **Reflect on the key takeaways:**

- Assertive communication is the healthiest style, it balances self-expression with respect for others.
- Unlike aggressive communication, it is not confrontational.
- Unlike passive communication, it ensures your voice is heard.
- Unlike passive-aggressive communication, it is direct and honest.

### **Reflection Questions After the Activity:**

- How did it feel to express yourself assertively?
- What is my current communication style?
- How do you think acknowledging the other person's perspective influence the conversation?

# 05

(10 min)

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## Personal Reflection

Take time to reflect (or write if you prefer) on the following:

- In what ways can assertive communication enhance my effectiveness working with young people?
- What internal beliefs make assertive communication challenging for me?
- What is one step I can take this week to practice assertive communication?

# 06

(5 min)

## Closing Takeaway & Action Step

### Key Insight:

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Combining assertiveness with empathy fosters authentic connections and paves the way for respectful and productive dialogues."

### Actions for the week ahead:

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Identify one upcoming conversation where you can practice assertive communication. Plan your approach, considering how to express your needs clearly and calmly while remaining open to the other person's perspective. Reflect on the outcome afterward to identify strengths and areas for growth.



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# Thank you

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Thank you for taking the time to explore how we communicate and how we hold space for difficult conversations. Speaking our truth with both strength and kindness is not always easy, but it is one of the most powerful tools we have in creating change. The way you communicate will shape the way young people learn to express themselves. When you approach conversations with clarity, confidence, and compassion, you model what it means to navigate conflict with integrity.

By practicing assertive communication, you are helping to build a culture where honesty and respect can coexist. Thank you for showing up for these conversations, for doing the work, and for creating spaces where every voice is heard.