



Being assertive



This booklet explains how we can share our point of view with others without hurting their feelings.

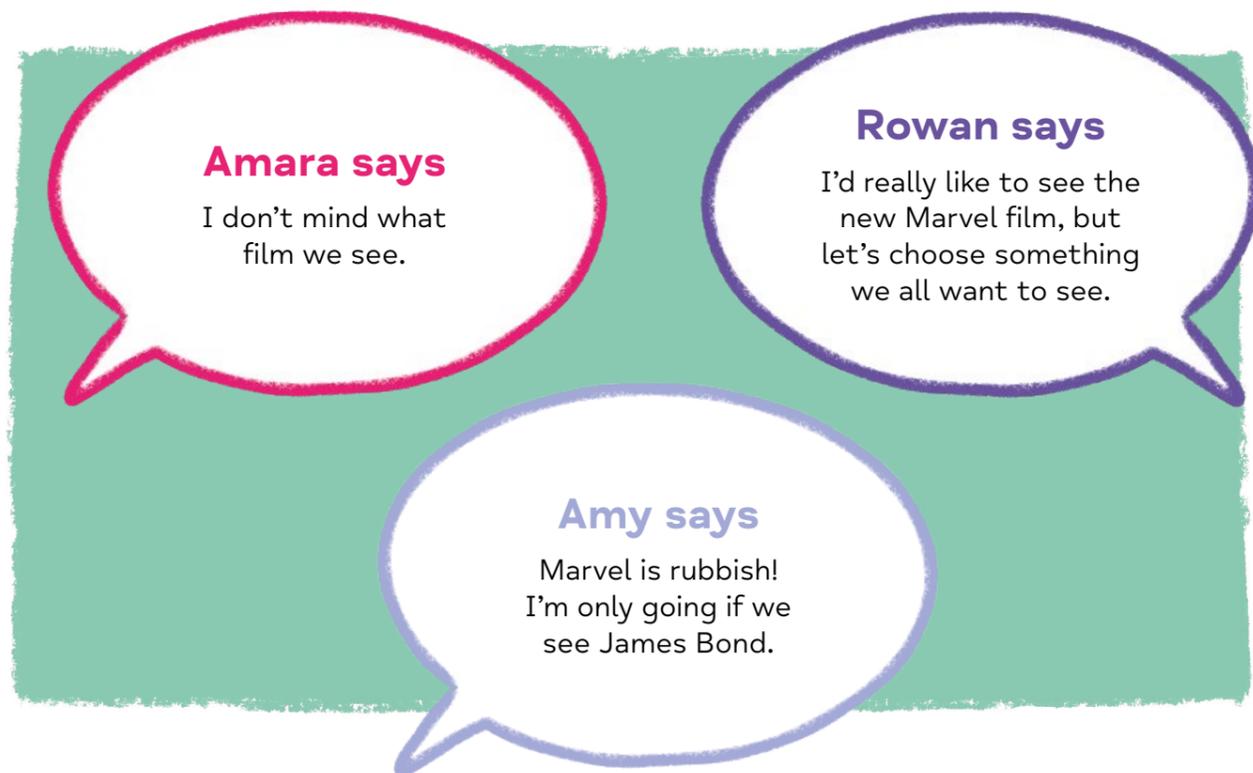
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What is being assertive?

Being assertive is a helpful way of communicating with others. It means letting people know what we want in a positive way. It can help us to explain our point of view, while showing that we care about other people's feelings:

- It's about being **confident**, but **not aggressive**
- It's about being **respectful**, but **not shy**

Let's look at 3 friends talking about what film to see:



In this example:

- **Amara** almost certainly does have an opinion, but she hasn't said what she feels because she doesn't want to cause any upset. This is sometimes called being **passive**.
- **Rowan** has been clear about their opinion, but respectful of everyone else. They have been **assertive**.
- **Amy** has been very clear about what she wants. But she hasn't been respectful and might have hurt Rowan's feelings. She has been **aggressive**.



Being passive, aggressive or assertive

These 3 words are ways of describing how we can communicate with each other.

Passive

With passive communication, we usually hold back from saying what we really think. We might also think that our opinions don't matter as much as others. Other people may not benefit from our views and opinions, which should be valued.

Some people might take advantage of us being passive. This means we could end up feeling angry at ourselves for not speaking up.

Assertive

With assertive communication, we say our views clearly and confidently. But at the same time, we also respect other people's opinions. Being assertive means that we're more likely to win people over to our point of view, without upsetting anyone.

Aggressive

With aggressive communication, we're too forceful in saying our point of view. Sometimes we get angry because we can't explain what we want in a positive way. We might have learned that the more we shout, the more likely we are to get what we want.

This may mean that we get our own way, but other people might feel ignored, not listened to, or even bullied. If we're aggressive, we can find it harder to make and keep friends. Angry feelings can make us more aggressive.

- It's very easy to get frustrated during disagreements and get angry, which won't help to resolve the issue at hand. It could even cause it to get a lot worse.



Exercise



What's my communication style?

Think about the way that you communicate with other people:

- Are you usually passive, aggressive or assertive?
- Does this change in different situations? For example, if you're talking in a group about something you feel strongly about.
- How often are you passive or aggressive?
- Do you think being more assertive could help you?

“ I can discuss things with my friends regarding their own triggers. We can discuss how I can help ensure these don't get in the way when I am with them. ”

We can be passive, aggressive or assertive at different times, depending on how we feel. The table on the next page has some examples. You might see these behaviours in yourself, or other people, when communicating in each way.



Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Afraid to speak up	Says what they think openly and respectfully	Interrupts or talks over others
Speaks quietly	Speaks calmly and in a normal tone of voice	Speaks loudly
Avoids looking people in the eye	Makes good eye contact	Glares or stares at others
Doesn't give much away in facial expressions	Uses facial expressions that match the way they feel	Makes people feel scared by staring or looking angry
Slouches or withdraws	Uses relaxed and open body language, like open palms	Looks rigid, tense and may have arms folded
Stands or sits away from others, doesn't get involved	Takes part fully in groups, without taking control	May invade others' personal space, controls groups
Agrees with others, even if they feel differently inside	Shares own feelings, but listens to others	Only thinks of self, ignores others
Values themselves less than others	Values themselves and others equally	Values themselves more than others
Willing to hurt their own feelings to avoid hurting others	Tries not to hurt anyone's feelings, including their own	Willing to hurt others' feelings to avoid hurting their own
Doesn't achieve goals, may not know own goals	Usually achieves goals without hurting others	Achieves goals, but often by hurting others
Thinks "you're okay, I'm not"	Thinks "I'm okay, you're okay"	Thinks "I'm okay, you're not"

Exercise



Trying to be more assertive

If you're sometimes passive or aggressive, spend a week trying to be assertive and see if it makes a difference.

If you're not sure how to do it, it may help to spend the first couple of days watching other people. Try and work out if their communication is more passive, aggressive or assertive.

Try and focus on people who you think are assertive – how do they put their views across? Could you make small changes to help you be more assertive? Fill in your notes from the week in the table below.

Who did I notice?	What did they do?	What was their communication style?

Once you feel ready, try out some of their assertive ideas for yourself.

Remember

- **If you're usually aggressive in these situations.** When you feel yourself getting angry, try to get your point of view across calmly, while respecting other people's opinions.
- **If you're usually passive and wouldn't say anything in these situations.** When you feel shy or embarrassed, make a real effort to say what you think. Other people might relate with, and benefit from, your point of view.



Fill out the table on the next page with the difference these changes have made, and what you might do next time.

There's enough space for 3 situations. You can include when being assertive worked for you, or when it didn't. **Next time you meet your practitioner, you can talk through your experiences.**

	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation 3
What happened?			
When did it happen?			
Where did it happen?			
Who else was involved?			
How did you feel at the time?			
How did you react?			
Were you passive, aggressive or assertive?			
What happened as a result?			
How did you feel afterwards?			
Are there any lessons to learn for the future?			

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