



How can I be more assertive when communicating?

Being assertive comes naturally for some people, but for others, it can take a lot of practice.

One way to help improve your assertive communication skills is to write a 'script' for what you want to say. The next time you're faced with a situation in which you'd like to be more assertive, use the four-part DESC method to create your own script.

DESCRIBE (WHAT IS HAPPENING)

- Describe the situation, issue or behaviour you're responding to.
- Describe the other person's behaviour objectively and specifically.
- Talk about what has happened, not what you think the motives of each party are.

EXPRESS/EMPATHISE

- Calmly express how the situation has made you feel.
- Use expressions like, "I feel ..." and "This made me...".
- Try to relate this to the behaviours of the other person, rather than the person themselves.

SPECIFY

- Be specific about what you want, including what you want done or stopped, and how you want the other person to behave.
- Try not to make too many requests at once.
- Make sure the other person is capable of making the changes you're requesting.



CONSEQUENCES

- Determine the positive consequences of the desired actions taking place, and the negative consequences of them not happening.
 - Try to emphasise the positive consequences, as this is more likely to result in success.
 - Only talk about the negative consequences if the positive approach seems to have failed.
 - If a negative consequence relates to an action on your behalf, make sure you're willing to carry it out.
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An example of this approach is shown below.

- **DESCRIBE:** *I'd like to talk to you about something that happened the other day. You yelled and swore at me about my report in front of everyone in the office.*
- **EXPRESS/EMPATHISE:** *This made me feel humiliated and upset, and I feel like this wasn't a professional way for you to discuss my work with me.*
- **SPECIFY:** *I want you to apologise for your actions, and agree to treat me with more respect in future.*
- **CONSEQUENCES:** *I think this would help us develop a better working relationship.*

[Negative: *If you don't do this, I will approach senior management to complain about the incident.*]



FURTHER INFORMATION

For help developing your assertive communication skills, make an appointment with your Employee Assistance Program.

We would like to thank Centre for Corporate Health (cfch.com.au) for their assistance in the compilation of this factsheet.



Corporate Mental Health Alliance AUSTRALIA

The Corporate Mental Health Alliance (CMHAA) is a group of Australian businesses dedicated to providing mentally healthy workplaces for their people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT:

Website: cmhaa.org.au

LinkedIn: [Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/corporate-mental-health-alliance-australia)



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