

## Tips for Behaving More Assertively

**Speak up when you have an idea or opinion:** This is one of the biggest steps toward being more assertive and can be easier than you think. It may be as simple as raising your hand in class, suggesting a change to your boss or coworkers, or offering an opinion at a meeting or party (even if it's just your opinion on a new book or movie).

**Stand up for your opinions and stick to them:** It can be a little harder to express opinions and stick to them when you know that others may disagree, but try to avoid being influenced by others' opinions just out of the desire to fit in. You may change your mind when someone presents a rational argument that makes you see things in a new light, but you shouldn't feel a need to change your mind just because you're afraid of what others may think. You will gain more respect by standing up for yourself appropriately than you will for not taking a stand.

**Make requests and ask for favors:** Most people find it hard to ask for help when they need it, but people don't always offer without being asked. As long as your requests are reasonable (for example, "Would you mind holding the door while I carry my suitcase?" as opposed to "Would you mind carrying my suitcase to the car while I watch TV?") Most people are willing to help out. If your requests are reasonable (meaning, would you respond kindly to the same request from another), don't feel guilty about asking.

**Refuse requests if they are unreasonable:** It's perfectly appropriate to turn down requests if they are unreasonable or if you don't have the time or resources. For example, if someone asks you to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable or you think is wrong, it's fine to simply say "no". It is also fine to turn down someone if you feel overwhelmed. If you are concerned that you aren't being fair to others, ask if their favors are fair to you (Would you ask the same of them? Would you expect them to say "yes" every time?) You can always offer to help in the future or help in another way. As long as you don't turn down every request that comes your way, there is no need to feel guilty.

**Accept both compliments and feedback:** Accepting compliments seems easy, but people often make little of them because they are embarrassed. But don't make less of your accomplishments. It's fine to simply say "Thank you" when people give you compliments – just don't chime in and begin complimenting yourself or you'll lose their admiration pretty quickly. Similarly, be prepared to accept feedback from others that may not always be positive. While no one needs to accept unwarranted or insulting advice, if someone gives you helpful advice in the right context, try to accept it graciously and act upon it. Accepting feedback (and learning from it) will often earn you respect and future compliments.

**Question rules or traditions that don't make sense or don't seem fair:** Just because something "has always been that way" doesn't mean it is fair. If you feel a tradition or rule is unfair to you or others, don't be afraid to speak up and question why that rule exists. Rather than break a rule or law find out the reasoning behind it. If you still think it's wrong talk to friends or coworkers, work with counselors and legislators, and see if there is a way to change it. While some rules are less flexible and should be respected, others may be open to debate.

**Insist that your rights be respected:** While you want to choose your battles carefully, you do have basic rights that you should feel comfortable standing for. Some of these rights may be guaranteed you under law, such as your medical, employment, and educational rights. Other rights may involve basic courtesy – such as the right to be treated fairly, equally and politely by friends, coworkers, and family.