

Assertive Message Role-Play

Assertive messages state your needs, opinions, ideas in an honest and respectful manner.

The first scenario provides a guide for formulating an assertive message. Choose additional scenarios provided to practice creating assertive messages for different workplace issues.

Example Scenario

Co-workers are gossiping about Sally because they've seen pictures of her wild weekend on Instagram. One co-worker approaches you to discuss Sally's behavior.

Step 1

"I" Statement: *"I feel* _____ . (Name the emotion, for example: uncomfortable).

Step 2

Name the trigger: *"...when/doing what/when you* _____
(what occurred to trigger this conversation?).

Step 3

State why: *"...because* _____ ." (Is it because Sally is a friend, you don't like gossip, or have been gossiped about in the past and didn't like it?).

Put the sentence together. What does it look like?

"I feel uncomfortable when you talk about Sally because she's a friend."

Or you can simplify it with: "I prefer not to discuss Sally."

Role-play Exercises

Work through the following examples in a group setting. Ask participants to read a scenario out loud. Give the participant time to formulate an assertive message that addresses the issue they read. Ensure that there are no pressure, and it's okay to work as a group to form messages.

1. It's Monday morning and you barely turned on your computer when your coworker walks into your office in tears to tell you about the horrible fight they got in at home over the weekend...again!
2. Your co-worker just left a meeting with the boss and walks into your office to tell you how hard the boss was on them. However, you've observed their work ethic and they don't carry their weight.
3. A coworker is making rude comments about another coworker.

4. Your new office mate wants the prime spot in the office.
5. Someone in the office comes to you and wants to gossip about a friend of yours.
6. You have decided to go out to lunch with a coworker. They took the liberty of choosing the restaurant and proceeded to talk about themselves through the whole lunch. After lunch they invite you to join them for lunch tomorrow.
7. You've been promoted and your coworker hasn't acknowledged your hard work instead stating that "Anyone can get THAT job."
8. Your coworker won't return your calls.
9. Your coworker has been overly nice to you throughout the last week. Now they're asking you to cover for them which includes lying to your boss.
10. You're feeling anxious because of an upcoming meeting and your coworker wants to chat about his own problems.
11. You're trying to get some work done and your co-worker wants to tell you why they are so upset... again!
12. You just received a new assignment that you're very excited about. Your coworker proceeds to tell you about the last person who had the position and how poorly it worked out for them.
13. Your new boss starts work on Monday. Your coworker wants to tell you the horrible things they've heard about the boss.
14. You have just gotten a prime assignment in your office. Your coworker is asking you to trade. You're hesitant to say "no" because in the past they have ostracized people when they haven't gotten their way.
15. Your coworker is complaining about the workload and how horrible the upcoming restructuring is going to be. You don't mind the workload and are trying to be optimistic about the restructuring.
16. Your coworker is angry with you because you didn't complete what was originally their work! Meanwhile they are spending a lot of time on personal phone calls.
17. A coworker is taking personal phone calls in your area and talking about very personal issues you prefer not to hear.
18. Two coworkers are in a dispute. One of them is trying to get you on her side. You prefer to remain neutral.
19. You've been asked to take on a project you don't have time to complete.
20. Your coworkers go out after work every Friday night and attempt to persuade you to come along. However, you're not interested.
21. Your coworker made a comment you find inappropriate.
22. You're happy to help your coworkers out, however, one particular coworker has just asked for your help (again) and you feel they are not carrying their share of the workload.

23. Your coworker just turned down the thermostat and you are already freezing.
24. Your coworker's heavy metal music is giving you a headache.
25. Your coworker has been listening in on your private conversations.
26. Your coworker has shared personal information about you that you only told to them.

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