

# Putting assertiveness to use

## Starting the conversation

Here are some ways to start your conversation. It can be helpful to practice saying these statements out loud.

1. “When I see/hear \_\_\_\_\_ , I feel (*not think*) \_\_\_\_\_.”

OR

“When \_\_\_\_\_ happens, I feel (*not think*) \_\_\_\_\_ .”

2. “Because I need/value \_\_\_\_\_ ...”

3. “Would you be willing to (*not demanding*) \_\_\_\_\_?”

## Tips

1. Use assertive body language:

- Face the other person
- Stand or sit straight
- Have a pleasant, but serious facial expression
- Keep your voice calm and soft

2. Use “I” statements:

- “I’d like to finish what I was saying.” versus “You always interrupt!”

3. Use facts, not judgments:

- “Did you know that shirt has stains on it?” versus “You’re wearing THAT?”

4. Express ownership of your thoughts, feeling, and opinions:

- “I get angry when you break promises.” versus “You make me angry.”

5. Make clear, direct, requests:

- “Will you please...” versus “Would you mind...”

## Recommended strategies

1. Summarize the other person's point to make sure you understand them.
2. Be very clear about what you want done to prevent distractions.
3. Repeat your point in a calm voice, without arguing.
4. Agree with some of the other person's statements that are true.
5. **When someone is not listening or avoiding the issue:** Stop talking about the problem and state how you feel when the other person does this.
6. **If the other person is very upset:** Let them cool down, then discuss the issue.
7. **When the argument is actually about something bigger than the immediate topic:** Hold the discussion for a minute to identify the real issue.

