

Rights of Assertiveness

The following list can be adopted (and amended as required) as a set of assertiveness rules by which you can live.

They remind you that you have the right to individual needs and can expect them without guilt or doubt (adapted from Smith, 1985).

I have the right to:

1. **Judge my own thoughts, emotions, and behavior** – while others' behavior impacts me, I can choose how I respond.
2. **Choose whether I am responsible for solving others' problems** – while I have compassion for others' problems, I am not responsible for solving their happiness.
3. **Change my mind** – nothing in life is constant. We change as an individual, and so do our environments. Therefore, it is not unreasonable for our views and beliefs to change over time.
4. **Say I don't know** – it's ok to say *I don't know*.
5. **Make mistakes** – it is entirely human to make mistakes. I can do so and take responsibility for them. Others may claim a mistake is unthinkable or unforgivable, but failure is essential to human growth.
6. **Be independent of others' approval** – while it is appreciated, I do not need others' permission to form my view.
7. **Be Illogical** – I can make decisions when insufficient information means logic cannot provide an answer or predict what will happen.
8. **Say I don't understand** – it's ok to say I don't understand. It often reflects more on the explanation than the listener's capacity to understand.
9. **Say I don't care** – I genuinely may not be interested in the subject or another's biased view.

While good manners are important, they can lead to a restrictive mindset. We don't have to say yes to everything, and we are ok to disagree with what is said.

References

- Smith, M (1985). *When I Say No, I Feel Guilty*. New York: Bantam

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