

practice of saying something to express their feelings at the time is a valuable step toward greater spontaneous assertiveness.

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Components of Assertive Behavior

Alberti & Emmons (1975) mention a few simple components which go together to constitute an assertive act:

1. **EYE CONTACT:** Looking directly at another person when one is speaking to him/her is an effective way of declaring that one is sincere about what one is saying, and that it is directed to him/her.
2. **BODY POSTURE:** The “weight” of one’s message to others will be increased if one faces the person, stands or sits appropriately close to him/her, leans toward him/her, holds one’s head erect.
3. **GESTURES:** A message accented with appropriate gestures takes on added emphasis (over enthusiastic gesturing can be a distraction).
4. **FACIAL EXPRESSION:** Effective assertions require an expression that agrees with the message (don’t express anger while smiling).
5. **VOICE TONE, INFLECTION VOLUME:** A whispered monotone will seldom convince another person that one means business, while a shouted epithet will bring one’s defenses into the path of communication. A level, well-modulated conversational statement is convincing without intimidating.
6. **TIMING:** Spontaneous expression will generally be one’s goals since hesitation may diminish the effect of an assertion. Judgment is necessary, however, to select an appropriate occasion, such as speaking to one’s director in their apartment, rather than at the main desk in front of a group of students where the director may need to respond defensively.
7. **CONTENT:** Although what one says is important, it is often less important than most believe. A fundamental honesty in interpersonal communication and spontaneity of expression is encouraged. That means, for example, forcefully “I’m damn mad at what you did!” Rather than, “You’re an S.O.B!” People who have for years hesitated because they “didn’t know what to say” find that the