



Speaking assertively

The way we communicate can make a difference. When your children are faced with a difficult situation involving others, what do they do? Start demanding their own way, raise their voice, look scared, drop their head or storm off and refuse to talk? Being able to communicate effectively is a skill that your children need to learn.

If your child doesn't express their thoughts or feelings or ask for what they want, always put their needs last, and say things like – *It's okay I'm happy to go along with what you want* – they are communicating passively. So they will often experience an outcome where they lose and the other person wins.

On the other hand if your child always puts their needs first, makes demands, thinks it's someone else's fault and blames them, looks angry and stands with their hands on their hips and does a lot of pointing, talks loudly at the other person and says things like – *You idiot. That's not going to happen* – they are using an aggressive communication style. Your child is aiming for an outcome of 'I win, you lose' which will often cause problems with others and compromise a relationship.

In class we are learning about speaking assertively. This is when a person tries to look at the problem from both sides. They state very clearly what they think, how they feel and what they want but they don't demand. Speaking assertively is when we say things like – I understand what you're saying but that's not how I feel. Let's try and work this out. The person is trying to achieve a win for everyone involved.

It's not only what we say but also how we say it that is important.

You can help your children to practise speaking assertively so that they become more competent and confident to handle difficult situations in a way that still allows them to meet their needs and maintain their relationships with others.

- Tell the other person what you are thinking, how you are feeling and what you really want.
- Stay strong and stand by what you think is right.
- Feel confident to say 'no' – don't feel guilty or worried.
- Understand that the other person also has a right to say 'no'.
- Use a calm voice and deliver your message in a non-threatening way.
- Stand up straight and look at the other person – don't stare. Try not to frown, point, or fold your arms in front of your chest.
- Tell them what you have noticed. *When I was at the party last week you kept trying to make me drink alcohol.*
- Tell them what you thought or how you interpreted what happened. *I thought it was rude and others kept looking at me.*
- Tell them how you are feeling about the situation. *I felt embarrassed and a bit angry.*
- Tell them what you would like to happen. *Next time we're at a party, let me decide what I want to do and don't try to pressure me.*