I, Me, & My: Little Words that Make a Big Difference in Agent-Customer Interactions
Grant Packard, PhD, Sarah G. Moore, PhD, and Brent McFerran, PhD

Coping with Stress in Real Estate
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Do Opposites Attract?
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Networking: The Difference in Knowing and Doing
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Cooperation in Client Relationships
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INSIDER: The Art of Everyday Assertiveness
Zack Snider, MBA Candidate

INSIDER: Show Up: Unlocking the Power of Relational Networking
Maria Arauz, MBA Candidate
Have you ever found yourself in a situation you really did not want to be in because you just went along with what your peers asked of you? Ever done something you had no plans to do because you felt you owed it to a colleague, friend, or family member? In situations like these, assertiveness is the key to getting “unstuck” from other people’s routine and unlocking your own motivators to do what YOU want for the reasons YOU deem important. In The Art of Everyday Assertiveness, Patrick King explains that mastering assertion in your life will pay off when you live on your own terms in pursuit of your dreams. It can be difficult to assert yourself if you have historically allowed others to push you around in some area of your life. Thankfully, keeping the following key points in mind will clear up some misconceptions about assertiveness and help you to overcome your hesitations in assessing yourself. Changing overly compliant habits can unshackle you from non-assertive behaviors and outside pressures to face life confident and assertive in addressing your needs.

**THINK POINT #1: Find the Right Balance**

Assertiveness is the art of conveying your desires and needs, whether for connection, belonging, purpose, or stability. A balancing act comes into play between expressing one’s own needs and adapting to the needs of others. To avoid becoming unduly selfish, assertive individuals must be aware of the needs of others and work to help meet those needs while still accomplishing one’s own goals. On the other hand, King warns readers against being excessively aggressive in achieving their goals. Finding the right mix of dash and daring can help you seize available opportunities while preserving relationships along the way and mitigating the risk associated with bold moves.

One element of assertiveness that cannot be overlooked is that assertiveness is an individual behavior and attitude. At the end of the day, when action is needed, you are your only advocate. If you do not prioritize your needs and express them, they will not be met, your life satisfaction will be diminished, and the cycle of un-assertive life will continue. While we are supposed to “play nice with others,” this societal expectation to be accommodating and selfless can grow into an attitude of submissiveness to exploitation. Though it may be a surprise, being pegged as
“agreeable” can indicate to others that you are a people-pleaser, someone they can get to do whatever they need without pushback or an assertion of your autonomy and voice. Although asserting your own needs may be important at times, excessive agreeableness tends to put undue emphasis on other people’s problems. Often, the people that make use of this trait are only out for their own gain (being assertive for themselves in a negative way) and care little about you or your problems beyond the extent required to hook you into doing something for them. Do not be afraid to establish boundaries and decide whether an outside project will be considered or undertaken.

THINK POINT #2: Speak Up and Stand by Your “NO”

Amidst the hustle and bustle of everyday life, it can be easy to think our minds are operating on the same page as those around us. Under those assumptions, context and expectations are known and mutually agreeable for easy communication. Reality, however, is not so ideal a construct. Here is another area to foster assertiveness and open up the advantages of having our needs out in the open. In order to receive what we need, we must speak up and make our wishes known. To avoid ambiguity, clearly communicate what you want and your expectations surrounding it. When we keep silent, we require others to read our minds to get to what we really want, leading to friction and confusion. With each person placing a different value on every act, leaving things up for interpretation only leads to miscommunication, disappointment, and frustration. Prevent all of this by stating what you want and how you want it.

King explains that just as it is important to speak up to get what you want, never hesitate to say “no” when you don’t want something. Part of assertiveness is recognizing what is and is not useful, appropriate, or interesting to you. In an attempt at politeness, avoiding conflict, or preserving the status quo of a relationship, people may forego their own objections to please others, which is not assertive behavior. Understand that it is okay to refuse a request or to deny someone your time. In doing so, it is important to refuse requests in the right way. Too many refusals and important relationships may be jeopardized. However, too loose boundaries can lead to going along with unproductive or unwanted obligations. By establishing boundaries and setting standards for what you choose to take part in, you gain ownership of your life and everyday activities. Lastly, once you’ve said “no,” don’t let others change your mind; help them respect your boundaries by refusing to negotiate once you make the decision to say “no.”

THINK POINT #3: Free Yourself

A consistent theme that accompanies assertiveness is a choice not to let the whims of others interfere with your ability to provide for your core, fundamental needs. Do not fall victim to the trap of emotional blackmail, wherein fear of repercussion and a willingness to accept an unacceptable situation prevents you from asserting yourself against that abuse. Instead of ignoring the issue and thereby exacerbating the problem by not fixing it, realize that you are under no obligation to go along with whatever you are being pushed toward. Additionally, King
notes that you should liberate yourself from a false sense of responsibility for things outside your control. You are not always to blame when things go wrong. Rushing to apologize for something for which you are not responsible burdens you with unnecessary guilt. Our desire to be polite—a good trait when well-balanced—can override our important needs if we allow ourselves to fall into timidity as opposed to confidence and assertiveness.

A very simple starting point for overcoming a lack of assertiveness is to diagnose your individual communication style to highlight the areas needing most improvement. Are you a passive communicator who struggles to express your feelings when you feel wronged, stewing to the point of explosive outburst? Are you aggressive in communicating, placing yourself at the center of attention and crowding out the needs and feelings of others to meet your own self-validation? Are you passive aggressive, avoiding addressing the root issues while lashing out in a secondary area totally unrelated to the problem at hand? Or are you an assertive communicator, standing up for your interests, expressing your desires in a healthy and straightforward way? Identify your communication patterns and work to develop healthy, assertive ways of communicating with others that meet your needs while respecting the needs of others as well.

**Conclusion**

Assertiveness is much more complex than it appears at first glance. Knowing the factors that contribute to an assertive mindset and attitude helps us hone our assertiveness and practice a balance of our needs with healthy concern for others. Finding the strength to assert your views will make your life better when, in a productive and healthy way, you prioritize your own life requirements, stand up for yourself and your limits and boundaries, and resist allowing negative pressures and expectations to change who you are and how you assert yourself to others.

**Recommended Reading**


**About the Author**

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Zack is a graduate student from Harker Heights, Texas. He received his BBA in Supply Chain Management and Management Information Systems with a minor in History from Baylor University. Prior to pursuing his MBA at the Hankamer School of Business, Zack worked in the grocery distribution industry with a focus in logistics operations. He is currently concentrating in Healthcare Administration with plans to transition into a medical device or pharmaceutical manufacturing role or a clinical administration role.