

The Importance of Being Assertive

As an official you are likely to be challenged at some time, regardless of the level you are officiating, by a player, coach or spectator. How you respond to this challenge will have a direct outcome on your management of the game and the respect given to you by those involved. In order to maintain control of the game, so everyone enjoys themselves within the rules and code of conduct of that game, being assertive is a key skill for every official.

Assertive style characteristics

- Respects self, respects others
- You're OK, I'm OK
- Avoids put downs, accepts compliments appropriately
- Requests, asks
- Open expression of expectations
- Confronts and accepts confrontation
- Registers complaints
- Deals openly with others
- Feels in control of self
- Positive self-esteem, alive, low anxiety, low defences
- Parity, equality
- Clear relationships, strong relationships
- Enhances self
- Doesn't play favourites, does what is right
- Evaluates and acts

Non-Verbal components of assertiveness

Body posture

The impact of your messages to others will increase if you are standing or sitting relaxed and upright, facing the other person with your head erect. Make sure the physical distance between you is appropriate.

Gestures and movement

Frequent or nervous body movements and vague gesturing will undermine your message.

Eye contact

Look directly and steadily at the person to indicate your confidence and sincerity.

Facial expressions

Make sure your facial expression matches your message. Smiling or laughing doesn't convey serious concern.

Voice volume

Use a level, well-modulated voice to convince rather than intimidate.

Timing

Hesitation may diminish the effect of your message, but sometimes it's necessary, as it indicates thought on your part. Pauses are effective, so is taking time to answer. Don't be rushed into responding – consult with other officials if available.

But remember...

The more you say, the less it means. As your Grandma used to say, with rolling pin in hand: "Be quiet and listen. That's why you've got two ears and only one mouth." You'll always learn more by listening than by talking.