

Confidence & Assertiveness

I asked the client to persuade a pony to take one step back without touching him. In a childlike voice she implored him to do as she wished. After about ten minutes of this, I asked her on a scale of one to ten how assertive she thought she was being. She became a little defensive, mumbled a 'two' and then shouted at the pony and pretended [I think] to be angry. The pony, unimpressed gave a big yawn and walked off.

My client did not know the difference between assertiveness and aggression. With my hands in my pockets, I smiled and calmly moved into her personal space and said, 'excuse me, would you take a step back please?' Telling people what you want is a powerful tool, especially if backed up by the energy of congruent body language.

Calm assertiveness springboards out of an inner confidence. In my opinion, confidence is created by the truth. The truth of who you are behind the mask and the certainty that no matter what people say about you or to you, your emotional strength will not be depleted.

There are plenty of techniques that can help you to become confident and assertive, far too many to list here, but let me give you a few pointers:-

- **Fake it!**
Yeah really! Pretend that you are a confident assertive person and keep doing it until you are.
- **Model someone else.**
Watch someone that you feel is calm, confident and assertive. This can be a friend, colleague, celebrity, TV character, or whoever appeals to you. Stepping into someone else's shoes can also help to take away the fear as you change.
- **Write down a list of your personal beliefs.**
And then analyse them. If you have a belief that you are unlovable, how effective do you think that will be in attracting people to you?

Remember that beliefs are not truths. As children we have little choice but to adopt the belief system of our parents, and later our peer groups. As we grow up we may or may not challenge these beliefs. In my opinion, **EVERY** belief you have **MUST** be challenged if you want to improve your life.

- **Write down a list of personal values.**

If one of your values was to be confident, are you saying that you want to be confident so that people don't walk over you? This is a '**moving away** from' value, and negates the power of that value. What the brain hears is '*people walk over me*' and you will get more of that!

Rewrite your values to be more proactive, for example 'I want to be confident so I feel happier in myself, can get a great job, follow my dreams, find a great partner' this is a '**moving towards**' value, and the brain hears '*happier, great partner, great job, follow dreams*' does that make sense?

- **Don't allow others to treat you badly.**

The first time is the hardest, so take a deep breath and say something like 'I feel upset by the way you just spoke to me.' By saying '*I feel*' you minimise the potential for defensiveness from the other person. If they continue, quietly repeat your statement, only this time you might say 'if you continue to talk to me this way, I will have to leave/put the phone down/walk away – whichever is appropriate. Speak calmly and without outward emotion, and I guarantee you will feel empowered.

- **Don't get defensive.**

When you become defensive, you give away your power. You do not have to own someone else's behaviour or opinion. Learn to be emotionally intelligent and choose your responses. It takes practice but once you commit to this, it will change your relationships for the better.

Being confident and assertive is not a gift; it is a practice that can be studied by anyone. Overcome your fears, do the things that scare you and I guarantee that each successful step that you take will empower your life in many and varied enriching ways.

Jan Barley



The People Whisperers
Personal Development Using the Language of Horses