Clear words. Mutual respect.

Welcome

Fourteen original resources for adults, therapists and clients. Explore communication patterns, prepare a message, practise a skill and review what you learn. Choose one useful sheet; there is no need to complete them all.

Choose your route

Understand: 01-03. Prepare: 04-06. Practise: 07-11. Review: 12. Therapist tools: 13-14. Each resource has a learning and example page, followed by a practice page. Use one or both pages as needed.

Printable or fillable?

Printable: print A4 at actual size or fit to printable area; write by hand. Fillable: download the PDF, save a personal copy and open it in a compatible PDF reader such as Adobe Acrobat Reader. Click a box or press Tab to move between fields. Save, close and reopen to check your answers remain.

Give your words enough room

Fields have a finite visible area. Keep answers brief so they remain visible when printed; text that scrolls may not all print. Use a separate notes page if needed. On phones and browser viewers, saving support varies; use a downloaded copy and check it before relying on it.

Use the format that suits you

Write, type, dictate into your chosen software or talk the prompts through with a therapist. Ask for processing time or written communication if helpful. Nervousness, a quiet voice or different eye-contact preferences do not by themselves mean someone is unassertive.

Thoughtful practice, at your pace.

Choose a suitable situation

These are educational practice tools, not a diagnostic test or a substitute for individual care. Where there are threats, coercion, abuse or credible retaliation risks, prioritise safety and suitable support. Do not use a direct confrontation as a practice exercise in an unsafe situation.

For therapists

Select tasks collaboratively and adapt to formulation, context, culture and communication preferences. Use role-play with an agreed pause signal. Review observable actions and learning, rather than requiring a particular facial expression, eye contact or a calm voice. Use professional judgement and your service policies.

Privacy and completed worksheets

The download page does not collect your answers. Completed copies are stored wherever you choose to save them; a cloud-connected PDF app may sync them. Avoid unnecessary identifying information. Therapists should use service-approved storage and sharing arrangements.

Using and sharing

These original SelfImproveCoach resources may be downloaded, printed and shared unchanged for personal learning and therapy sessions, including paid clinical practice. Keep the source credit visible. They are not standardised measures. Worked examples are fictional and do not describe a real client.

Background reading

Concepts were checked against the Centre for Clinical Interventions, Assert Yourself! resource series (definition, recognising styles, assertive thinking and practical techniques). These sheets use original wording, examples and layouts; they are not CCI worksheets or an endorsed adaptation.
https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/resources/looking-after-yourself/assertiveness
Prepared 21 October 2026.

UNDERSTAND / RESOURCE 01

My Communication Starting Point

Notice strengths, difficult situations and one useful starting goal.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

Effective communication includes expressing yourself, listening and checking understanding. Assertiveness means making your needs or views clear while respecting other people. You can feel uncertain and still communicate assertively. Start with a situation that matters to you; you do not have to change everything at once.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Sam often agrees to extra tasks before checking their diary. Their starting goal is: "When I get a request, I will say, Let me check and get back to you, before I answer." This is a small action Sam can practise, rather than a demand to feel confident.

START HERE

What already works well in the way I communicate?

Which situation would I like to handle differently?

What do I usually say or do in that situation?

UNDERSTAND / RESOURCE 01

My Communication Starting Point

Notice strengths, difficult situations and one useful starting goal.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

Use a specific action as the goal. Confidence may change later; it is not a requirement for starting.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

What matters to me about making a change?

One small action I want to practise (what, with whom, when):

How will I know I tried it? Choose something I can observe.

What support or communication adjustments would help?

My confidence now, 0-10; one thing that could make practice easier:

UNDERSTAND / RESOURCE 02

Passive, Aggressive or Assertive?

Compare communication styles and rewrite a response in your own words.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

These words describe behaviours, not fixed types of people. Passive responses leave your needs unclear or unexpressed. Aggressive responses use blame, pressure or disregard for others. Assertive responses express needs directly and respectfully. Tone alone does not tell the whole story. Choosing silence for safety is different from freely agreeing.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Someone interrupts you. Passive: "Never mind, carry on" (although you wanted to finish). Aggressive: "Shut up. You always interrupt." Assertive: "I would like to finish my point, then hear yours." Notice both clarity and respect in the last response.

START HERE

Which response above expresses a need clearly and respectfully? Why?

Practice: "I do not care what you want. We are doing it my way." Which style, and what tells me?

Practice: "I suppose that is fine" (when it is not fine). Which style, and what is left unsaid?

UNDERSTAND / RESOURCE 02

Passive, Aggressive or Assertive?

Compare communication styles and rewrite a response in your own words.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

Practice answers: doing it my way = aggressive; agreeing while hiding a different wish = passive. Look at context, not labels alone.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

My own situation, described briefly:

A passive response might be:

An aggressive response might be:

An assertive response in words that sound like me:

Whose needs does my assertive response acknowledge?

UNDERSTAND / RESOURCE 03

My Communication Pattern Map

Connect a situation, prediction, feeling and response.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A communication pattern can bring short-term relief while creating difficulties later. Mapping one episode helps you notice what happens before and after your response. Describe what you know, separate it from what you guessed, and consider what the response helped you manage at the time.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Situation: asked to work late. Prediction: "If I refuse, they will think I am selfish." Feeling: anxiety, tight chest. Response: agree immediately. Short term: relief. Later: tired and resentful. Possible alternative: pause, check capacity, then answer clearly.

START HERE

What happened? Who was involved? Keep facts separate from guesses.

What went through my mind? What did I predict?

What emotions and body sensations did I notice?

UNDERSTAND / RESOURCE 03

My Communication Pattern Map

Connect a situation, prediction, feeling and response.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

Explore the function of the response with curiosity. A learned protective response is not a character flaw.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

What did I say or do, including avoiding, hinting or over-explaining?

What happened immediately? What did the response help me avoid?

What happened later, for me and the conversation?

What might keep this pattern going?

One alternative response I could try, with appropriate support:

PREPARE / RESOURCE 04

What Am I Feeling and Needing?

Turn a general sense of upset into a clearer message.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

Before choosing words, separate the event, your interpretation, your feelings and what matters to you. A need might involve rest, fairness, information, privacy or connection. A request is a specific action you would like someone to consider. They may have a different view; naming a need does not guarantee agreement.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Event: a friend changed the meeting time and I found out late. Feeling: frustration. Need: reliable information. Request: "I would like a message as soon as the plan changes." Interpretation to check: "They do not care about my time."

START HERE

What happened that someone else could have seen or heard?

What meaning did I give it? What am I assuming?

What feelings do I notice? How strong are they, 0-10?

PREPARE / RESOURCE 04

What Am I Feeling and Needing?

Turn a general sense of upset into a clearer message.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

You do not need the perfect emotion word. "Upset", "unsure" or "overwhelmed" can be a useful starting point.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

What matters to me here? What might I need?

What specific action would I like to request?

What could the other person need or see differently? I can check this.

My clear message, in one or two sentences:

What would I like to clarify before the conversation?

PREPARE / RESOURCE 05

Listen, Check and Understand

Practise listening, reflecting and checking before responding.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

Listening means making space to understand, rather than preparing a defence or solution. Reflect the main message in your own words, then check it. Understanding a view does not require agreeing with it. Adapt the format: written messages, extra processing time and a quieter setting may help. Eye contact is not a test of listening.

WORKED EXAMPLE

A partner says, "You always jump in with advice." A checking response: "It sounds as though you wanted me to listen before suggesting solutions. Have I understood? Would you like me to listen, help think it through, or both?"

START HERE

What did the person actually say?

What is the main message I heard?

What might I be assuming that I need to check?

PREPARE / RESOURCE 05

Listen, Check and Understand

Practise listening, reflecting and checking before responding.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

If either person is overloaded, agree a pause and a time to return rather than forcing an immediate answer.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

My reflection: "It sounds as though..."

My check: "Have I understood...?"

One open question I could ask:

Their clarification, or what I still need to understand:

What helped me listen? What adjustment would help next time?

PREPARE / RESOURCE 06

What Makes Speaking Up Difficult?

Explore predictions, rules and a more flexible way forward.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

Beliefs such as "I must not disappoint anyone" can make requests and boundaries feel risky. Treat predictions as ideas to explore, not facts to obey. Consider the relationship and power differences. Where speaking up could lead to threats, coercion or harm, prioritise safety and support rather than using a conversation as an experiment.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Rule: "If someone is disappointed, I have done something wrong." Cost: agreeing when exhausted. More flexible view: "I can consider others and still have limits. Their disappointment does not by itself mean I was unfair." A small practice could be expressing a preference to a trusted friend.

START HERE

What am I afraid will happen if I speak up?

What rule am I following? Where might I have learnt it?

How does this rule help me, and what does it cost?

PREPARE / RESOURCE 06

What Makes Speaking Up Difficult?

Explore predictions, rules and a more flexible way forward.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

Do not equate a feared reaction with an unlikely reaction. Take credible risks and the person's lived experience seriously.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

What supports my prediction? What suggests another possibility?

A fairer, more flexible view I could try:

Is this suitable for practice? What support or safer approach is needed?

One small situation where I could test my prediction:

What would I observe, and how would I support myself afterwards?

PRACTISE / RESOURCE 07

Build an Assertive I Statement

Describe your experience and make a clear request without blame.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

Try: "When [specific event], I feel [emotion]. I would like [specific action]." This is a flexible aid, not a compulsory script. A shorter message may be clearer. "I feel that you are selfish" is a judgement, even though it starts with I. Name behaviour rather than guessing motives.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Instead of "I feel you never respect me", try: "When our plans change and I do not hear about it, I feel frustrated. I would like a message when the time changes." Short version: "Please let me know as soon as plans change."

START HERE

The specific situation or behaviour I want to discuss:

My feeling or personal experience (without a judgement about them):

The clear action I would like to request:

PRACTISE / RESOURCE 07

Build an Assertive I Statement

Describe your experience and make a clear request without blame.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

An I statement can express a need or limit directly: "I need time to think." You do not have to disclose a feeling to justify a boundary.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

My full message: "When... I feel... I would like..."

My shorter version, if that feels more natural:

Any blame, "always", "never" or mind-reading I could revise:

How can I leave room for a reply?

My final wording after reading it aloud or practising in writing:

PRACTISE / RESOURCE 08

Saying No and Setting a Boundary

State a limit and plan what you will do if pressure continues.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A request asks someone to do something. A boundary states your limit and, where needed, the action you will take. Keep that action within your control and appropriate to the situation. You can offer an alternative if you want to, but it is not required. An apology may be appropriate for harm; having a need does not itself require one.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Request: "Please lower your voice." Boundary: "If the shouting continues, I will pause this call." Declining a task: "I am not available this weekend." If pressed: "I understand this matters. I am still not available." Choose a safer approach if ending the conversation could increase risk.

START HERE

What am I being asked to do, or what behaviour concerns me?

What is my actual capacity or limit?

My brief no or boundary statement:

PRACTISE / RESOURCE 08

Saying No and Setting a Boundary

State a limit and plan what you will do if pressure continues.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

A boundary is not a threat to control someone. Plan a realistic action you are prepared and able to take.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

An alternative I want to offer, if any:

If pressed, my respectful repeat of the limit:

If needed, what action can I take within my control?

What context, safety or practical issues affect this plan?

How will I support myself if I feel guilt or discomfort afterwards?

PRACTISE / RESOURCE 09

Making Requests and Finding Agreement

Explore options that respect both people's needs.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

Choose a specific request and ask about the other person's view. Look for options rather than assuming there are only two choices. Flexibility means considering alternatives, not surrendering an important limit. If agreement is not possible now, clarify the next step or return to the discussion later.

WORKED EXAMPLE

"I need 30 minutes of quiet after work. Could we talk at seven?" The other person needs to leave at seven. An option: a brief practical check-in now and a longer conversation at eight. Both people check whether this arrangement works.

START HERE

What am I asking for? Make it specific and realistic.

What matters most to me? Where can I be flexible?

What might matter to them? What will I ask rather than assume?

PRACTISE / RESOURCE 09

Making Requests and Finding Agreement

Explore options that respect both people's needs.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

Agreement is not the only measure of progress. A clear request and an accurate understanding of differences are useful outcomes too.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Option 1 and how it might meet both sets of needs:

Option 2, including any limits or trade-offs:

The request or proposal I will put into words:

What did we agree: who will do what, and when?

When will we review it? If no agreement, what is the next step?

PRACTISE / RESOURCE 10

Responding to Criticism and Repairing

Sort useful feedback, clarify concerns and set respectful limits.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

Pause before deciding whether feedback is accurate, partly accurate, unclear or insulting. Ask for a specific example if needed. Acknowledge what is fair without agreeing to everything. Repair an actual mistake with a proportionate apology and action. You can discuss a problem while setting limits around insults or intimidation.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Feedback: "You were late and I was waiting." Response: "You are right that I was late. I am sorry I kept you waiting. Next time I will message if I am delayed." Vague accusation: "Can you give me a specific example?" Insult: "I am willing to discuss the issue without name-calling."

START HERE

What was said, as accurately as I can recall?

What is specific and potentially useful? What is unclear or unfair?

What did I feel or feel an urge to do?

PRACTISE / RESOURCE 10

Responding to Criticism and Repairing

Sort useful feedback, clarify concerns and set respectful limits.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

You can take time before replying: "I want to think about that and come back to you." Adapt to the situation and any immediate responsibilities.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

A question that would help clarify the feedback:

What can I acknowledge honestly, without taking responsibility for everything?

An apology or repair action, if appropriate:

A limit or pause I need, if appropriate:

My final response, and what I would like to learn from this:

PRACTISE / RESOURCE 11

My Assertiveness Practice Ladder

Plan manageable practice and test one prediction at a time.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

List situations from easier to harder and choose a manageable starting point. This is not a requirement to tackle every situation. Practise words in a role-play, written draft or voice note first. Predict an observable response, then compare it with what happens. Success includes making a respectful attempt, even when you feel nervous.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Easier: express a preference for where to meet (3/10). Next: ask a colleague for clarification (4/10). Later: decline a small request (6/10). Prediction for first practice: "My friend will complain if I choose." Plan: state one preference and notice their actual reply.

START HERE

An easier situation to practise; difficulty 0-10:

A moderately difficult situation; difficulty 0-10:

A harder situation for later, if appropriate; difficulty 0-10:

PRACTISE / RESOURCE 11

My Assertiveness Practice Ladder

Plan manageable practice and test one prediction at a time.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

Start where learning is possible. If a step is too much, make it smaller rather than treating that as failure.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

My chosen first step: with whom, where and when?

My exact prediction and how likely it feels, 0-100%:

Words I will try and a support or adjustment I can use:

What will I observe? What would count as trying the skill?

After practice: what happened, and what step fits next?

REVIEW / RESOURCE 12

Conversation Review and Progress Log

Compare predictions with events and decide what to practise next.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

Review a conversation briefly and fairly. Separate what you controlled from the other person's reaction. Look for evidence, effort and learning rather than replaying every sentence. You can notice something to improve while also acknowledging that you expressed a need. Use another copy for each practice if helpful.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Prediction: "They will be angry if I decline." What happened: they looked disappointed, then asked someone else. My action: I said no clearly without blaming. Learning: disappointment was uncomfortable, but I could tolerate it. Next: use the same wording for another small request.

START HERE

Which conversation am I reviewing? Date and situation:

What did I predict, and what did I want to communicate?

What did I actually say or do?

REVIEW / RESOURCE 12

Conversation Review and Progress Log

Compare predictions with events and decide what to practise next.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

Aim for a few minutes of useful reflection. Repeatedly searching for the perfect wording can become another way to criticise yourself.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

What did the person actually say or do? What remains unknown?

What went well in clarity, respect, listening or boundaries?

What was difficult, and what would I adjust?

What did I learn about my prediction or belief?

One next practice step and when I will review it:

THERAPIST TOOLS / RESOURCE 13

Communication Session Planner

Plan a collaborative session, rehearsal and between-session practice.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

Use with clinical judgement and the client's goals. Clarify a specific episode and its maintaining cycle before selecting a skill. Consider culture, power, discrimination, trauma, neurodivergence and preferred communication formats. Do not use eye contact or a uniformly calm voice as universal success criteria. Check whether direct practice is appropriate and safe.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Goal: pause before agreeing to extra work. Cycle: fear of rejection -> instant agreement -> relief -> overload. Session: explore prediction, practise a brief pause statement, then agree one low-stakes trial. Feedback focuses on clarity, choice and fit with the client's values.

START HERE

Client reference / date (use a service-approved identifier):

Collaborative target: specific episode and desired change:

Maintaining cycle: triggers, beliefs, emotions, responses and consequences:

THERAPIST TOOLS / RESOURCE 13

Communication Session Planner

Plan a collaborative session, rehearsal and between-session practice.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

Use service-approved storage for completed clinical records. The website does not need to collect worksheet answers.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Context, accessibility, power and safety considerations:

Selected skill and why it fits this formulation:

Rehearsal plan: roles, wording and agreed feedback focus:

Between-session practice: prediction, action, observation and support:

Review plan, outcome markers and any supervision questions:

THERAPIST TOOLS / RESOURCE 14

Role-Play Scenarios and Feedback

Rehearse a realistic conversation and give collaborative feedback.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

Agree the scenario, level of challenge and how to stop or pause. Ask what feedback would be helpful. Let the speaker choose wording that feels authentic. Rehearse one skill, offer specific observations, then try again if useful. Feedback concerns behaviours and context, not personality. Written or message-based role-play is equally valid.

WORKED EXAMPLE

Choose or adapt: work - decline a last-minute task; family - ask for notice before visits; friendship - express a different preference; appointment - ask for an explanation; relationship - request quiet time. Start cooperatively. Add mild disagreement only with the speaker's agreement.

START HERE

Chosen scenario, roles and the speaker's goal:

Exact opening words to practise:

Agreed challenge level, pause signal and communication adjustments:

THERAPIST TOOLS / RESOURCE 14

Role-Play Scenarios and Feedback

Rehearse a realistic conversation and give collaborative feedback.

Name / reference: _____ Date: _____

A HELPFUL REMINDER

Ask before increasing pressure in a role-play. Stop and review if practice becomes overwhelming or no longer feels collaborative.

PRACTISE IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Clarity: what need, request or limit did I hear? Give an example.

Respect and listening: what did I observe? Avoid assumptions.

Speaker reflection: what felt natural, difficult or useful?

One change for a second attempt, and what happened when tried:

Transfer to everyday life: next step, support and review date: