

WHY CAN'T I JUST SAY NO?

T: +27 51 401 2853 / +27 58 718 5125 / +27 51 505 1989 / E: scd@ufs.ac.za / scclqq@ufs.ac.za / scdsouth@ufs.a.za
www.ufs.ac.za/kovsiecounselling

*Inspiring excellence, transforming lives
through quality, impact, and care.*



UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA

WHY CAN'T I JUST SAY NO?

Lize van den Bergh



Students (and people in general) find saying no very challenging at times. It may be that you struggle with certain situations (like asking questions) or with specific people, such as parents, for example.

THERE MAY BE VARIOUS REASONS FOR YOUR DIFFICULTY, SUCH AS:

Fear:

- that the person(s) might react in an unpleasant way
- that the person(s) may reject you

Belief systems:

- that your opinion is less worthy/not important
 - that you should always help people and put them first
-



A low **self-esteem** can exacerbate these reasons. It can make you fear losing people that are important to you as well as make you believe that you are not as important as other people. If you want to have **different** results from interactions with people, you need to **choose** different reactions.

Learning to be assertive is a lifelong skill. It takes time and practice, so be patient with yourself (and others).

You also need to **accept** that some people might not be happy with the changes within you. That, however, is their problem. You have every **right** to stand up for yourself. Your **responsibility** lies in how you choose to react. How they in turn react is again up to them.

Steps:

1 Develop nonverbal assertive behaviours.

Your body communicates more than your words, so it is important to learn how to stand your ground physically. Observe how you stand/sit during conflict situations. Square your shoulders and try to keep your voice calm and firm.

2 Recognise and be willing to exercise your basic rights.

We are often taught that we are not allowed to stand up for ourselves. This is not true. Remind yourself that you have the right to say no, change your mind, ask questions, express feelings, change and grow, be respected, etc.

3 Become aware of your own unique feelings, needs and wants.

You have to know what you are feeling and why you are feeling it to be able to fully and effectively communicate it to others. We are sometimes unaware of our true feelings or needs and this can lead to more frustration. It is like ordering a pizza and being disappointed when it arrives because you actually wanted a burger.

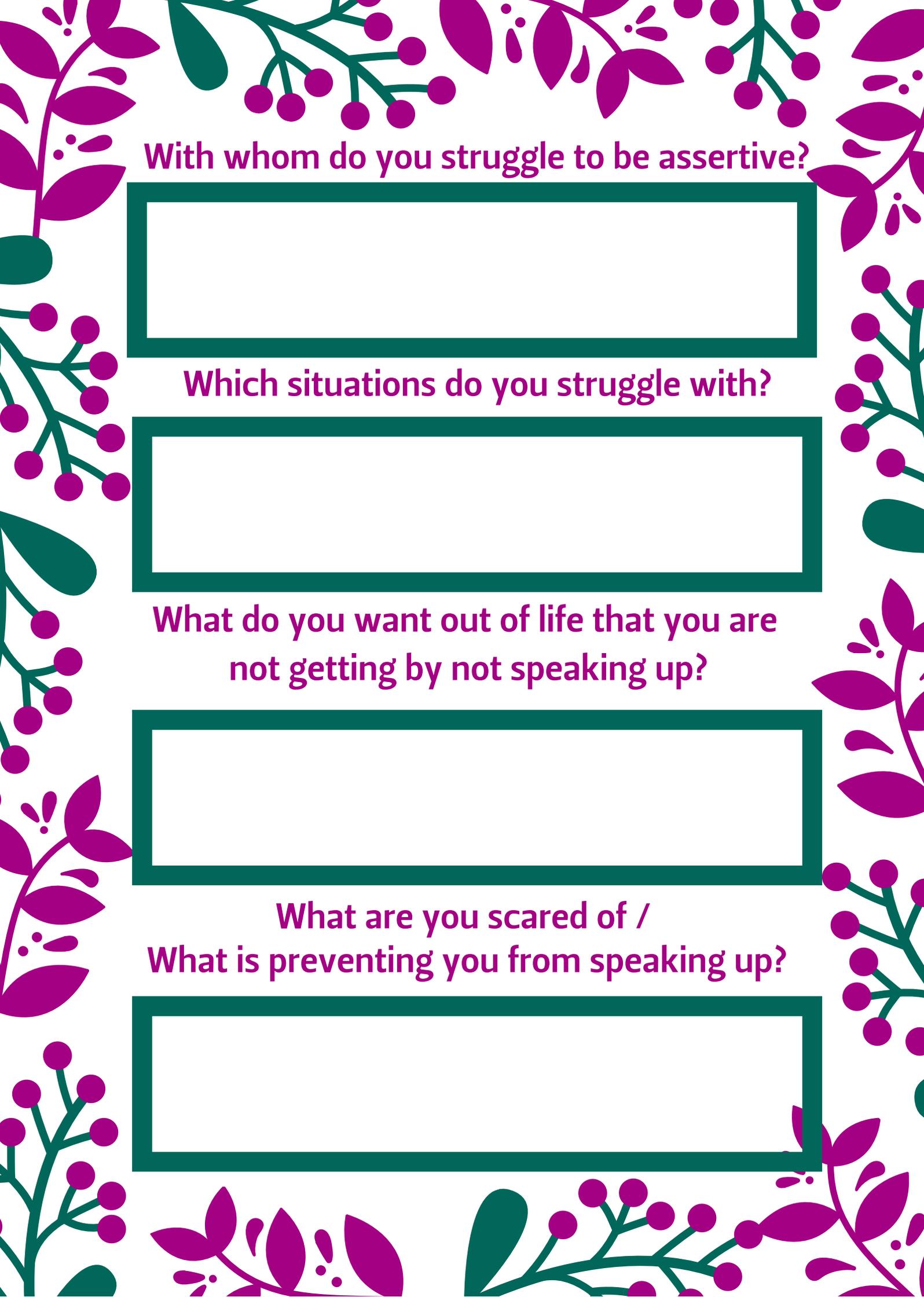
4 Practise assertive responses by writing, role playing and applying this to real life.

The final step is to start practising assertive behaviours. It helps us prepare for those difficult situations. Write down what you would do in a situation, practise it on your own and then with a friend. Do not be discouraged if things don't go as you had hoped or planned. That is part of life. Rather, focus on what you did well and build on that.



Assertiveness is your ability to act in harmony with your self-esteem without hurting others.

Author unknown



With whom do you struggle to be assertive?

Which situations do you struggle with?

What do you want out of life that you are not getting by not speaking up?

What are you scared of /
What is preventing you from speaking up?

MY PERSONAL BILL OF RIGHTS

I have the right to:

- make mistakes and not be perfect
- ask for what I want
- say no to requests or demands I can't meet
- express all of my feelings, positive or negative
- change my mind
- follow my own values and standards
- say "I don't know"
- say no to anything when I feel I am not ready, it is unsafe,
- or if it violates my values
- determine my own priorities
- not to be responsible for others' behaviour, actions, feelings or problems
- have my own needs and wants respected by others
- expect honesty from others
- be angry at someone I love
- be uniquely myself
- my own needs for personal space and time
- be in a non-abusive environment
- change and grow
- be treated with dignity and respect
- be happy



RESOURCES



WEBSITES

www.mindtools.com
www.skillsyouneed.com
www.mayoclinic.org
au.reachout.com

APPS

Learn to Be Assertive
Confidence Booster: Self Esteem &
Assertiveness Training

CONTACT US AT:

+27 51 401 2853 (BFN)
+27 58 718 5125 (QQ)
+27 51 505 1989 (SOUTH)

scd@ufs.ac.za
scdqq@ufs.ac.za
scdsouth@ufs.ac.za

BOOKS

"The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook" by E.J Bourne

"The Assertiveness Workbook: How to Express Your Ideas and Stand Up for Yourself at Work and in Relationships" by Randy J. Paterson

"When I Say No, I Feel Guilty: How to Cope - Using the Skills of Systematic Assertive Therapy" by Manuel J. Smith