**The boss of me**

Through this activity, students will explore the difference between anger, assertiveness and aggression. You will learn to recognise the signs and indicators of aggression and anger and develop strategies to calm the anger. You will develop the skills to take an assertive stance in different situations.

Duration: 60 minutes

**Focus of the learning**

* Analyse the physical, mental and emotional signs of anger.
* Understand the difference between avoidant, assertive and aggressive responses.
* Develop a range of strategies for dealing effectively with the feeling of anger.
* Learn to deal with anger before reacting to a situation.
* Apply respectful assertiveness in resolving conflict situations.

**What you need**

* Access to YouTube clip - Being assertive <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubSL1tFmgDc>
* Scenarios
* Communication styles worksheet

## Activity

It is important to recognise feelings of anger, reframe thoughts and build skills to exercise self-control as a way to prevent violent situations. This encourages time to calmly and logically deal with the problem that angered them in the first place.

This activity allows you to explore the difference between anger, assertiveness and aggression. You will learn to identify the tell-tale signs of anger, and develop strategies to calm anger. You will explore three styles of responding to anger and propose actions and reflect on taking an assertive stance in different situations.

If any content within these activities causes concern or distress, access your teacher or seek help through established organisation.

[Headspace](http://www.headspace.org.au/) – a National Youth Mental Health Foundation helping young people with general health, mental health and counselling, education, employment and other services and alcohol and other drug services.

[ReachOut.com](http://au.reachout.com/) – an online youth mental health service where young people can get the help they need, where and when they need it.

### How do you respond to anger?

* Create a list of what triggers a young person to feel angry.
* Use a mindmap to brainstorm or record ways you can tell you are starting to feel angry, e.g. feel hot, can’t think straight.

Signs of anger can be classified as mental, emotional and physical signs.

* Look at your mindmap or brainstorm.
  + Choose a coloured highlighter to represent mental signs of anger. Highlight all of your examples which are mental signs of anger with that highlighter.
  + Choose a coloured highlighter to represent physical signs of anger. Highlight all of your examples which are physical signs of anger with that highlighter.
  + Choose a coloured highlighter to represent emotional signs of anger. Highlight all of your examples which are emotional signs of anger with that highlighter.
* Read the scenarios. Each scenario depicts a situation and a person’s response to that situation. For each scenario:
  + identify whether the situation triggers feelings of anger
  + identify whether the response to the challenging situation is considered avoidant, assertive, or aggressive. What makes the response avoidant, assertive or aggressive?

**Avoidance or submissive communication**

We prioritise the needs and feelings of others at our own personal cost. We are unable to effectively communicate our own needs and as a result we avoid confrontation, agree submissively or please others. The result might be feeling taken for granted, inequality in relationships, being treated unfairly or taken advantage of by others.

**Aggressive communication**

We prioritise our own needs, preferences and feelings over the needs of other people. This can be perceived as selfish, arrogant or self-centred. Other people can feel ignored, criticised or bullied.

**Assertive communication**

The needs and feelings of both sides are considered in a balanced and respectful manner. This involves clearly communicating what we need and listening carefully to the needs of others.

* Review the scenarios which have assertive responses. Analyse the ways people in the scenario acted assertively to resolve the problems.
* For each scenario where tell-tale signs of anger were apparent, record some ways to deal calmly and logically with the problem. For example, take some deep breaths or go somewhere private and yell or cry to release the tension.

Respectful communication

The following activities can be completed on one of two ways, dependent on your access to internet. You could also complete both ways to increase your understanding.

**Version 1: Digital version**

* Watch the YouTube clip, Being assertive: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubSL1tFmgDc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubSL1tFmgDc)
  + List the characteristics of respectful, assertive communication. Take into account social and cultural variations, e.g. talk at a respectable volume and pace, stay calm, state what you want, state the reasons, express gratefulness of others’ change, respectfully accept if situation cannot be changed.

**Version 2: Non-digital version**

* Complete the Communication styles worksheet to build your understanding of how to assert yourself respectfully.

### Scenarios

#### Scenario 1

Ethan has played an online game for three hours. In that time, he has moved up to the top level and has gained 500,000 coins and three of the best weapons. A stronger opponent challenges him, he loses, and the opponent makes off with his weapons and coins. Ethan starts screaming and swearing and throws his laptop against the wall.

#### Scenario 2

Kaitlyn does not agree with how her father talks to her. She feels he belittles her and treats her like a little child. When he refuses to let her watch the latest movie with her friends, because the rating deems it inappropriate for her age, Kaitlyn becomes sullen and withdrawn. When her father talks to her, she rolls her eyes or gives him blank stares, not responding to his questions.

#### Scenario 3

Rory is being harassed at school for not liking or playing sports. He has tried to watch sport and become interested, but it hasn’t worked. As he was getting on the bus in the afternoon, the same group of boys as usual begin to chant his name and taunt him with demeaning phrases. Rory puts in his earphones and hides his face to cover the tears.

#### Scenario 4

Isabelle’s friend borrows small amounts of money from her all the time, but never manages to pay her back. This afternoon the friend asked for $15 so she could go the movies with their group of friends. Isabelle only had enough for her own ticket and dinner. if she gives her friend the money for the ticket, she won’t have enough left to buy herself something to eat for dinner. She lends the money to Isabelle but feels angry that she probably won’t get the money back, and that now she won’t get to eat until she gets home later that night.

#### Scenario 5

Jackson referees junior touch football on the weekends. There is a strict no smoking policy on the grounds, for the health and welfare of the players. Parents all sign a form at the start of the season stating they are aware of this, and there are signs on the clubhouse and in the parking lot reminding everyone of the policy. Throughout the first half, Jackson grows increasingly annoyed, as he continually smells cigarette smoke coming from the sidelines.

When the half time siren sounds, Jackson takes a moment to slow his breathing, and unclench his fists. He walks over to the parent and calmly explains there is a no smoking policy, and the reasons for the policy, as well as the places the parent can go to smoke.

#### Scenario 6

Roslyn bought a pair of pants for her part-time job as a waitress. She wore them twice, and already the hem came down on the pant leg. When Roslyn returns them to the store, the assistant refuses to refund her money because they have already been worn and the tags have been cut off. Roslyn feels embarrassed and angry because she can’t afford another pair, and feels it isn’t right that she might have to pay for a repair. Roslyn calmly hands over the receipt, showing the date of purchase was only a few days ago, points out the good condition of the rest of the garment and explains that the sewing on that hem must have been faulty, as the other hem is intact. The assistant agrees to exchange the goods for being faulty.

### Communication styles - worksheet

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Feature** | **Avoidant** | **Aggressive** | **Assertive** |
| Pace | hesitant, filled with pauses and rambling sentences |  | fluent, with steady, even pace |
| Tone | often dull, sing-song or whining |  | clear, middle range, rich and warm |
| Volume | quiet, often dropping away | often shouting |  |
| Style | apologetic | threatening | factual, expressing own |
| Phrases | If it wouldn’t be too much  trouble…  I wouldn’t normally say anything, but…  I could be wrong… | You’d better watch out.  If you don’t…  You must be joking  Why on earth did you…? | I like…  I want…  My experience is…  I feel… when you…  What do you think…? |
| Eye contact |  |  |  |
| Posture |  | leaning forward or over into another person’s space |  |
| Hands | wringing hands |  | open, relaxed hand  movements |
| Face | nervous grinning, trembling  jaw | sneering, scowling, clenched jaw |  |