



# Confidence-Building Skills for Women

## Worksheets

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# The AEIOU Communication Model

The AEIOU communication model is a conversational tool that can help you to plan a dialogue. It can also serve as a guide during a discussion.

- Acknowledge the other person's positive intentions.
- Express your thoughts and feelings.
- Identify your proposal.
- Outline the benefits of the outcome.
- Understand each other and check.

## A–Acknowledge the Other Person's Positive Intentions

- Give the person the benefit of the doubt.
- Identify the other person's needs.
- Verbally acknowledge positive intent.

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## E–Express Your Thoughts and Feelings

- Use "I" statements, but avoid "I feel that you..." comments.
- Address issues and behaviors, not personal characteristics or personality traits.
- Avoid generalizations and words that may provoke defensiveness, such as "always," "never," and "bad."
- Avoid words that ridicule or shame, along with profanity, labels, or derogatory terms.
- Stay calm and focused.
- Use a firm yet pleasant voice.

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## I–Identify Your Proposal

- Clearly define your objectives and recommendations.
- Pinpoint areas of agreement.
- Anticipate possible objections, and plan appropriate responses.

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## O–Outline the Benefits of the Outcome

- Present the features and benefits.
- Point out the advantages of the proposed recommendations to the other person.

Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Next

### **U—Understand Each Other and Check**

- Ask for feedback on what has been proposed.
- Clarify, as needed.
- Get agreement on specific action—who will do what, when, and where.
- Develop alternatives and a workable compromise.

### **Sample Lead-in Phrases**

- **A:** "I know that you..."
- **E:** "I feel (think)..."
- **I:** "I propose..."
- **O:** "I anticipate..."
- **U:** "I understand that..."



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# Create Your Own AEIOU Dialogue

**Instructions:** Use the space below to plan an AEIOU dialogue for a business or personal situation.

What is the situation?

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Use brief notes to plan the dialogue and to familiarize yourself with the AEIOU steps.

- Acknowledge:

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- Express:

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- Identify:

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- Outcome:

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- Understanding:

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# Assertive Techniques

## Broken Record

Calmly and persistently repeating what you want again and again.

## Fogging

Acknowledging possible truths in criticism, while refusing to be angered by it.

## Negative Assertion

Accept your errors and faults (without having to apologize) by strongly and sympathetically agreeing with hostile or constructive criticism of your negative qualities.

## Negative Inquiry

Asking for further, specific criticism in order to prompt your critic to provide more useful and less manipulative feedback.

## Free Information

Recognize simple cues given by a social partner in everyday conversation to indicate what is interesting or important to that person.

## Self-Disclosure

Accept and initiate discussion of both the positive and negative aspects of your personality, behavior, lifestyle, and intelligence to enhance social communication and reduce manipulation.

Smith, Manuel J. *When I Say No, I Feel Guilty*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1975.



Next

# My Assertiveness Challenge

Think of a situation in which you recently found yourself challenged to assert yourself. Keeping this situation in mind, answer the following questions:

- Broken Record
- Fogging
- Negative Assertion
- Negative Inquiry
- Free Information
- Self-Disclosure

- What was preventing you from being assertive?

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- Which of the six assertiveness techniques is most appropriate for the situation?

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- Create your assertive response using the most appropriate assertive technique.

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# How to Say “No” and Survive

Often, we are unable to say “no” because we feel guilty or are fearful someone will get angry or express disappointment. When we don’t say “no,” we do anger and disappoint someone—ourselves. Saying “no” is a way to establish boundaries and live our lives.

- Know what you want to and can do.
- Say “no” firmly and calmly.
- Use the word “no” as the first word of your response.
- Briefly give a straightforward reason for your refusal—not a long-winded excuse or justification.
- Offer a choice or alternative.
- Boycott the words, “I’m sorry.”
- Use nonverbal cues to reinforce the “no” message.
- Use the broken record technique until the person “hears” you.
- When in doubt, if you can or can’t do something:
  - Say “no.”
  - To “buy” time for yourself, pause first and then provide a response.



Next



# How Many Ways Can You Say “No”?

Just because “no” can be a difficult word doesn’t mean that there isn’t more than one way to say it! It is important to use the word “no” in your response so that the listener is more apt to hear the word “no” and less likely to misinterpret your reply.

There are many ways to say “no.” Some are listed below. Can you think of any others? Place a check mark next to those you would like to use more often.

- ☐ No.
- ☐ No, thank you.
- ☐ No, I can’t fit it in.
- ☐ No, I don’t have the time for that project.
- ☐ No, I don’t have the authority.
- ☐ No, I’m not the appropriate person to handle this. \_\_\_\_\_ is.
- ☐ No, my schedule/plate is full.
- ☐ No. Thanks for thinking of me.
- ☐ No, I wouldn’t.
- ☐ No, I’m at my limit.
- ☐ No, I’m already stretched as it is.
- ☐ No, that’s not okay with me.
- ☐ No, I don’t know the answer.
- ☐ No, that’s not acceptable.
- ☐ No, that’s not an acceptable answer.
- ☐ No, that won’t work for me.
- ☐ No, please take me off your list.
- ☐ No, I don’t agree.

## Other Ways to Say “No”

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

☐

\_\_\_\_\_

# Responding to Put-Down Statements

Below are some common put-downs that others may say to you. In the far right column, write your best-considered, assertive reply—what you could say the next time someone says this to you. Feel free to add any other put-downs you feel you need to work on responses for.

Downer Behavior	Put-Down Statement	Your Assertive Reply
1. Nagging about details.	"Haven't you done this yet?"	
2. Prying.	"I know I maybe shouldn't ask, but..."	
3. Putting you on the spot socially.	"Are you busy Tuesday?"	
4. Giving unwanted advice.	"If I were you..."	
5. Using insulting labels for your behavior.	"That's a dumb way to..."	
6.		

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