

Protect Yourself From A Threat ~ How To Sound And Look Like You Believe What You Are Saying

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Self-defense includes more than knowing how to hit or kick; it also includes knowing skills and behaviors that can prevent a problem in the first place.

People are more likely to believe you and do what you want them to if you sound and look like you believe in what you are saying. This is true whether you are ordering someone approaching you on the street to leave you alone, telling a co-worker to stop making insulting jokes, inviting someone to join you for lunch, marketing something, or asking someone to donate money to your favorite cause.

You can change your way of presenting yourself depending on what you want. If you want someone who is scaring or bothering you to stop some behavior, be definite. If you want another person to be interested in doing something with you, be enthusiastic. If you want someone who is scared to feel safe, be caring.

For effective self-defense and self advocacy, pay attention to your tone of voice and choice of words. Are you raising the tone at the end of each sentence to make it a question? Making statements into questions leaves you sounding uncertain and anxious. Are your words vague or positive and clear? If you want to communicate something really important to you, it can be worth taking the time to write the words down and practice out loud in front of a mirror. Get feedback from other people to make sure that you sound both confident and respectful.

Pay attention to your body language and facial expressions; projecting an attitude of awareness and confidence is a powerful self defense skill. Are your shoulders slumped? Is your head down? Do you have an apologetic smile on your face? This makes you look like a victim. Are you glaring at someone and making rude gestures? This makes you look like an aggressor. Most communications with others will work best if your body is upright and your face is calm.

In a confrontation, ordering someone to "PLEASE STOP!" is apt to work much better than, "Would you please stop, okay?" At the same time, you don't want to escalate a potential confrontation by insulting

someone. Dealing with a conflict works best if your voice, tone, words, body, and expression are firm, polite, strong and clear.

What about a situation in which you are trying to get someone to do something you think is worthwhile? Make sure that you don't sound whiny or phony. It is hard not to sound like a pleading child if you really want someone to do something. It is normal to feel frustrated with other people when they don't do what you want. However, people are rarely motivated by feeling guilty blamed. Even the tiniest hint of negativity is likely to cause the other person to not want to deal with you. At the same time, a friendly tone of voice covering up irritation can come across as phony and make you sound untrustworthy.

Try to empathize with the other person's perspective. People are often overwhelmed by their lives. They are most likely to listen to you if your voice, words, body, face and underlying attitude are consistently positive.

Self-defense skills such as these – projecting an attitude of awareness and confidence, looking and sounding like you mean what you are saying – can prevent many problems from escalating. They can also be effective tools for getting what you want much of the time.