1. Basic Assertion

This is simply standing up for your rights, opinions, feelings, or wants. Honestly saying Yes or No is a Basic Assertion.

“I don’t think older people should be discriminated against in hiring. I’ve had an excellent experience with them.”

“Thanks for helping out when I needed you.”

Q: “Are you angry with me?”
A: “Yes, I am”

Expressing wants and preferences in terms of Basic Assertion can be done through I Want Statements (i.e. “I want to do this,” or “I want you to do this.”)

You Can Begin With These Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I want..........</th>
<th>I’d like............</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I need..........</td>
<td>I’m curious.........</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would prefer..</td>
<td>I’d appreciate.....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you please.</td>
<td>I’m interested.....</td>
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“I do want to know what I did that made you angry but I don’t want you to call me names.”

“Excuse me, I’d like to finish what I was saying before we get to your objections.” (Or I’d like to hear your objections.”)

“Yes, I’d like to get together for dinner, but I don’t want to go any place where I have to get dressed up.”

“I’d like to see you more often, like a couple of times during the week. What do you think about that?”
2. Contextual Assertiveness

Many times it is important for you to let other people know what effects their behavior is having on your life. There are four parts to Contextual Assertiveness. While they may be expressed in any objective sequence, saying them in the order shown can help you remain objective while you’re delivering your message:

When you..... (you non-judgmentally described some specific behavior of the other person)

The effects are.... (you describe as specifically as possible how the other person’s behavior concretely effects your life. Avoid the term “you make me....”)

I feel... (at your discretion you may describe your feelings)

I prefer... (you describe what you want)

EXAMPLES:

(with feeling statement omitted)

“You’re probably not aware of this, but when you turn in reports that have been written in light pencil, it takes me twice as long to read them. I’d really appreciate it if you’d write them in dark pencil.”

(with feeling statement included)

“When you’re on the road and fail to contact the office for several days it becomes impossible for us to deal with new requests for servicing. This has caused us to lose several good contracts. I’m irritated about this and from now on I would prefer that you telephone us every day at noon.
3. **Empathic Assertiveness**

This conveys your sensitivity and recognition of another person’s feelings, wants and/or viewpoints, followed by a statement in which you state your requests, feelings and/or viewpoints.

Assertion with empathy is often effective in caring relationships, because the listener is more likely to accept your assertion when s/he feels you have some understanding and respect for her/him. It is especially valuable in situations when you tend to overreact in an aggressive way. If you take a moment to try to understand the other person’s viewpoint before you react, you are less likely to respond aggressively. On the other hand, your expression of empathy must be sincere in order to be effective. People can usually spot insincere expressions of empathy and resent such attempts to manipulate.

The first part of your recognition statement does not mean sympathy or agreement, but rather simply shows that you see, hear, acknowledge, realize one or more of the following:

- her situation (i.e., pressure, troubles, lack of information)
- her wants (i.e., to do a good job, to do things his way)
- his beliefs (i.e., that he has been unfairly treated)
- his feelings (i.e., that he’s irritated, upset, had a bad day)

The second part of your communication is your Basic Assertion and states your situation, request, beliefs, or feelings.

“I realize that you really want to get off work for the holidays and be with your family, and yet I’m running short handed and need you here.”

“I guess you’re feeling under pressure and would rather not talk about how you feel and yet I’d appreciate it if you would.”

“I know you’re in a hurry and anxious for those figures, but I won’t be able to start them until I finish Mr. Jones’ report. That should take about half an hour.”
4. **Escalating Assertiveness**

Frequently a simple statement of assertion made in a friendly manner will be effective. On the other hand, you’ll sometimes have to deal with people who persist in violating your rights or ignoring your stated preferences. In such cases, you can state your position with increasing firmness without becoming aggressive. You may move from a request to a demand, from a preference to an outright refusal, or from a Empathic Assertion to a firm Basic Assertion. A good rule of thumb is to limit yourself to three responses.

“I’d prefer not to say how much money I earn.”

“I realize that other people may not mind saying their salaries but I don’t want to say how much money I make.”

“I must insist that we drop the subject.”

5. **Repeated Assertion**

Frequently it is effective to simply restate your assertion. This can be done when the other person over-reacts to your statement or when she ignores it in some way. To prevent sounding like a broken record, it is important to avoid a “sing-song” or monotonous tone of voice.