How to be Assertive: Using Body Language

Being bullied can have negative effects on your self-esteem and confidence. Even though you might not feel your best when you are bullied, being assertive when responding to bullying can be a great way to take back whatever feelings of confidence the bully has taken away.

An easy way to show confidence is through your body language. Body language makes up over 75% of your communication. And your body language is something the bully watches to know if what they are doing is working.

**GOAL** Think about what your body language looks like for a passive response, an assertive response and an aggressive response when you are being bullied.

In the boxes below, list 5 ways you communicate each of these with body language. Then list what each of these responses tells the bully.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| PASSIVE | ASSERTIVE | AGGRESSIVE |
| \_  \_  \_  \_  \_ | \_  \_  \_  \_  \_ | \_  \_  \_  \_  \_ |
| What does this response tell the bully? | What does this response tell the bully? | What does this response tell the bully? |

Why does being passive not work when being bullied?

Why does being aggressive not work when being bullied?

Why is being assertive a better choice when being bullied?

ANSWERS:

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|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| PASSIVE | ASSERTIVE | AGGRESSIVE |
| * Cry * Cower * Sulk * Talk in a quiet voice * Avoid eye contact | * Use a strong confident voice * Stand tall * Keep eye contact * Keep hands at side * Face the bully directly | * Hands in fists * Loud voice * Standing close to the bully * Frowning * Making sudden movements or insulting gestures |
| What does this response tell the bully?  This response tells the bully you are afraid. It tells them that you will take the bullying and not stand up for yourself. | What does this response tell the bully?  This response tells the bully that you are willing to stand up for yourself if you need too and that you are not an easy target. It will make them think twice about bullying you. | What does this response tell the bully?  This response threatens the bully. It will probably escalate the situation and will not help solve the problem. |

**Why does being passive not work very well when being bullied?**

Using passive body language when being bullied does nothing to stop the bullying. In fact it can encourage the bully by sending them the message that they victim is probably not going to stand up for themselves. These are the types of reactions the bully is hoping to get from the victim, which will also encourage the bully more.

**Why does being aggressive not work when being bullied?**

Using aggressive body language when being bullied does nothing to stop the bullying. Being aggressive will almost always escalate the situation in a negative way. The bully will take aggressive body language as threatening and intensify their bullying of the victim. If the bullying becomes physical and the victim fights back, the victim may also be blamed or get in trouble.

**Why is being assertive a better choice when being bullied?**

Being assertive is the best way to put an end to bullying. By being assertive you are sending the message that you are in control of yourself, you understand what the bully is doing and you are not putting up with it. Using assertive body language shows a bully that you are willing to stand up for yourself and that you are not an easy mark.