

Reading list: Being assertive in challenging situations

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1 Description

- This tailored reading list includes signposted web links, links to e-Books held by the BMA library, and journal articles on the topic of ***being assertive in challenging situations*** as a supplement to the Learning and Development webinar you attended on 15 February 2023.
- The selected content is representative of the current literature on this topic, inclusion on this list does not imply endorsement from the BMA.
- If you would like to request a literature search on any aspect of this topic please fill out a [request form](#) (this service is available to BMA Members only).
- This reading list prioritises online content to ensure all attendees can benefit from this supporting resource. However most full text links will be accessible to BMA Members only. Find out more about [the benefits of BMA Membership](#) and [join here](#).
- The BMA Library prioritises an e-first approach, however if you are near BMA House in London, we have a modern, purpose-built library space where members are welcome to come and study. Find out more and see how we can help you [here](#).

2 Obtaining full text articles

2.1.1.1 Full text links

If available, the full text link has been included.

2.1.1.2 Search for Journals

The BMA Library provides access to thousands of e-journals for all BMA members. Use our [journal search](#) or [search by citation](#) options on the library website.

2.1.1.3 Article Requests

Members can use our article request service to request digital copies of articles that are not available in our library collections. We will try to obtain these copies from other libraries in the UK on your behalf for a fee: £4.10 (+VAT) for the first ten article requests; £13 (+VAT) for all subsequent requests. To request digital copies of articles, use the [order an article form](#) on the library website (you must be signed in).

2.1.1.4 E-Books

We provide free, direct access to thousands of e-books for BMA members.

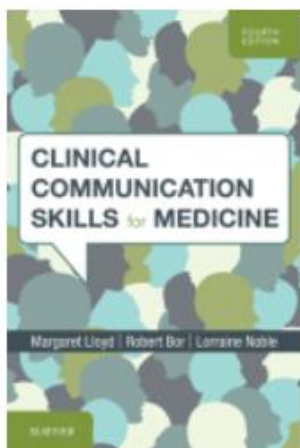
2.1.1.5 Further help

For any further help with getting full text articles, please contact the BMA Library Team (bma-library@bma.org.uk)

3 Results

Results

3.1 e-Books



Lloyd, Margaret et al. *Clinical Communication Skills for Medicine*. Philadelphia: Elsevier, 2018.

Available online [here](#)

The purpose of this book is to produce a practical guide to the learning and development of communication skills that is of value to students throughout their careers. The order of the chapters reflects this development, from basic communication skills to those required in dealing with challenging situations.



Polack, Lisa. *Communicating effectively in the workforce*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2020.

Available online [here](#)

If you understand how communication works, then you have a good chance of diagnosing and fixing communication problems. Chapter 6 distinguishes among the following difficult communication patterns: hostile-aggressive, passive-aggressive, procrastinating, negative-complaining, and arrogant. It applies coping techniques to use with difficult communication patterns.



Hasson, Gill. *Brilliant Communication Skills, revised 1st edition*. Pearson Business, 2015.

Available online [here](#)

What does it take to be a successful communicator? Just about every job requires excellent communication skills. To get ahead at work you need to be able to express yourself clearly and understand the feelings, needs and intentions of others.

3.2 Web links

BMJ Learning

BMJ Learning

Assertiveness in the workplace

The aim of this module is to provide you with practical assertiveness skills that you will be able to apply to your workplace.

Available online [here](#)



NHS Health Education England

HEE Assertiveness Workbook. 2020

This workbook will help you to be assertive without damaging your working relationships. Whether you find that you are not assertive enough, or come across as too assertive, the following exercises will guide you through what high quality assertiveness looks like and how you can apply these skills in your personal and professional relationships

Available online [here](#)



Primary Care Knowledge Boost

Assertiveness in General Practice

The discussion in this podcast is all about assertiveness - we chat about what assertiveness is, general tips, frameworks and models for how to approach assertiveness, as well as showcasing how these can work with a few examples.

Available online [here](#)



Science of People

The Nice Person's Guide to Being Assertive

Think being assertive means barking orders and demanding your needs? Don't worry. You can speak up and still be nice. Here's how with real-life examples.

Available online [here](#)

**Indeed***12 assertive leadership techniques for successful leaders*

Assertiveness is a key component of successful leadership. No matter what leadership style a manager follows, being assertive helps in achieving their desired results and getting the best out of their team. Some people are naturally assertive but for others, it's a skill that's beneficial to learn and develop. In this article, we define assertiveness and provide 12 assertive leadership techniques that can enable you to be a more assertive leader.

Available online [here](#)

**Management Centre***I'm Ok, You're Ok – Assertiveness at work explained*

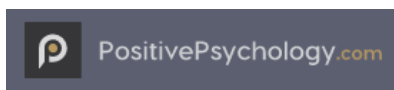
Being assertive at work can be hard, and this is something many people struggle with. Our insecurities, perceived weaknesses, motivations and goals can all stop us from being assertive when we need to be. This article explains why we need assertiveness, what it actually is, and how to be assertive.

Available online [here](#)

**Mind Tools***Assertiveness: Asking for What You Want Firmly and Fairly*

This article looks at why assertiveness is important, and explores some strategies that you can use to become more assertive to further both your confidence and influencing skills.

Available online [here](#)

**Positive Psychology***Assertiveness in Leadership: 19 Techniques for Managers*

This article explores the role of assertiveness in leadership and management and introduces techniques to help achieve a delicate balance that avoids both passivity and aggression.

Available online [here](#)

3.3 Google Scholar



intitle:assertiveness (challenging OR difficult) AROUND(2) (situation OR behaviour) communication (clinician OR doctor OR "general practitioner")

Click link to see [Google Scholar results](#)

BMA members can follow the instructions set out in [this library blog post](#) to directly access the full text of any of the Google Scholar articles that the BMA library has a subscription to (you only need to follow these instructions once).

**Please note that as Google Scholar results are ordered by relevance, the first few pages of results will be the most useful.*

3.4 Journal articles

1. Markov Zlatka M. (2018)

“Assertiveness: The style of good communication, the skill of standing up for oneself and of developing quality interpersonal relationships”

Opšta Medicina 24 (1-2), p. 51-60

[Click to view reference](#)

Man is a social being, and interpersonal relationships are important for his optimal growth and development. Quality of relationships depends on the communication skills of a person. One good and positive communication is assertive communication. Assertiveness in English means the readiness of an individual to confirm, protect, or defend his or her rights, to act confidentially and to take a stand. Assertiveness is most often clarified in the context of two qualitatively different forms of interpersonal behaviour - passive and aggressive. The advantages of assertive communication are the person feels good in relation to himself and in relation to others, self-esteem increases, it helps to achieve goals, reduces anxiety, provides the possibility of free choice in life, enables expression of all channels of communication, and helps to better manage the stress. The basic right for assertiveness is that a person has the right to express himself and take it for himself. Other rights have been derived from this right. There are several types of assertiveness: basic, empathic, escalating, confrontational, and so on. Assertive communication can be learned at assertive trainings that involve the application of different techniques, as well as by acquiring and developing assertive skills through practice. It is important to know: 'We are not born with the gene for assertiveness,' but it is a skill that is learned and acquired. It is also a form of behaviour in social interactions in which we express our thoughts, desires and feelings. It helps us to function better in all spheres of life, to reduce stress, to express our disagreement without 'falling into' nonconstructive conflicts, to deal with unfavourable situations and to deal with 'hard' people to avoid manipulation. Assertiveness is the question of individual choice.

2. Pattni, N. et al. (2018)

“Challenging authority and speaking up in the operating room environment: a narrative synthesis”

British journal of anaesthesia 2019, 122 (2), p.233-244

[Click to view reference](#)

Multidisciplinary care teams exist throughout healthcare systems. In the operating room (OR), effective communication between teams is essential, especially during crisis situations where patient safety can be in acute danger. An often-neglected skillset in educational curriculums is challenging authority. This narrative synthesis aims to explore the literature on challenging authority in the OR environment. A systematic search of Medline, EBM reviews and PsycINFO was conducted using terms related to challenging authority, speaking up, communication, patient safety, gradients and hierarchy. The initial search identified 4822 publications, out of which 31 studies were included. The data synthesis of the included studies was grouped into three distinct categories following a meta-aggregative approach: discussion and review articles, observational or qualitative studies, and studies identifying the role of specific barriers or investigating the effect of educational interventions. Themes emerging from expert beliefs, what reality tells us and what we test are consistent. Hierarchy, organisational culture and education are the most frequently observed and tested themes. Simulation research has been successful in eliciting and confirming the role of specific barriers to speaking up. Barriers and enablers are largely modifiable within institutions however, education regarding the importance of speaking up will need to accompany these modifications for any significant changes to occur.

3. Oxtoby, K. (2017)

“How to assert yourself as a junior doctor”

BMJ 2017; 356: i6830

[Click to view reference](#)

Kathy Oxtoby looks at how doctors can stand up for themselves in the early stages of their careers.

4. Lindsay, C. (2002)

“Being assertive”

BMJ 2001; 323:0107239.

[Click to view reference](#)

Assertiveness has the potential to open more career doors than any other set of personal skills. It can boost self-esteem, build confidence, reduce personal stress levels, and help people get as much from their working environment as they can. With the ability to treat colleagues positively and fairly, assertive people gain the respect and genuine liking of those they work with. They feel good about themselves and their abilities, respond well to difficult situations, and manage their time efficiently by saying “No” to unreasonable demands. Creating around them a relaxed environment in which problems can be openly discussed, assertive people give and receive criticism constructively, deal with negative emotions healthily, and handle conflict effectively. Communicating assertively can lead to happier working conditions, lower stress levels, and greater performances at work.

Learning to be assertive is probably of greater relevance to medical students and junior doctors than doctors already established in the profession when stubborn attitudes and unspoken conflicts are common practice. It helps you survive the hierarchical system and arrogant behaviours that will sometimes do their best to undermine you, your abilities, and your needs.
