PRACTICAL RESOURCE

Assertiveness & Boundary Sentence Starters

Practical language for expressing preferences, needs, limits and disagreement without over-explaining.

Assertiveness is not aggression
Assertiveness means making your position clear while recognising that the other person is allowed to have a position too. You are not required to make them agree with you.

Simple sentence starters

- **Preference:** 'I'd prefer...'
- **Need:** 'I need...'
- **Boundary:** 'I'm not willing to...'
- **Limit:** 'I can do X, but I can't do Y.'
- **Delay:** 'I need some time to think about that before I answer.'
- **Disagreement:** 'I see it differently.'
- **Request:** 'Would you be willing to...?'
- **Correction:** 'That's not what I meant. What I meant was...'
- **Ending a discussion:** 'I don't think continuing this conversation right now is useful.'
- **Broken-record boundary:** 'I understand you disagree. My answer is still no.'

Build your own sentence

When... (describe the situation without character assassination)

I feel / I notice...

I would like / need / prefer...

Before you say it

- Am I trying to communicate, or to force agreement?
- Is this a request, a preference or a boundary?
- What am I actually willing to do if the boundary is ignored?
- Can I say this in one or two sentences rather than giving a courtroom defence?

Rehearse three real sentences

1.

2.

3.

Remember
You can be kind and still say no. You can understand somebody's disappointment without taking responsibility for removing it. You can disagree without proving that the other person is wrong.