



Building confidence and assertiveness

Age range: 16-19

 **BARCLAYS** | LifeSkills



Session overview

Time	Key learning outcomes	Resources
30-60 mins	<p>By the end of the activity students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider personal barriers in overcoming challenges • Identify techniques to help in challenging situations • Identify the difference between assertive, passive and aggressive behaviour • Describe some examples of assertive behaviour • Apply different techniques in responding to situations in a controlled way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building confidence and assertiveness student worksheet • Building confidence and assertiveness presentation slides

Remember that you can refer to the guiding principles for establishing a safe learning environment in the Appendix section of the LifeSkills content guide. This includes suggestions for signposting students to further support. The content guide can be downloaded [here](#).



LifeSkills is pleased to have worked with The National Autistic Society to ensure the following lesson plan can be adapted to suit the needs of autistic students.

If teaching a lesson including autistic students here are some key considerations when undertaking the following activities:

- Give solid examples wherever possible, for example explain a scenario where someone might have done something wrong in an interview. This is because abstract/hypothetical ('what if') scenarios can be challenging for autistic students
- Be aware that autistic students can sometimes have difficulty recognising or understanding other people's emotions and expressing their own, as well as relating to situations that they haven't been in themselves – visual aids may help with this
- Use concrete language and consider how what you say may be interpreted literally
- Some autistic students can find group work challenging and it can cause high anxiety. Instead, you may need to think of this as a reasonable adjustment for them by giving them other options. Avoid pressuring/forcing or judging them. Instead listen, to understand any concerns they may have. Be flexible and prepare in advance so you can offer options and alternatives – such as working in pairs/smaller groups/assisting or working with the teacher/support instead. It's important that autistic students aren't left out/isolated or assume that they can or can't join in – everyone is different and a lot may depend on the environment they are in and how comfortable they feel. Ask them what would be best to do and help them get the best out of their learning

Please note you will need a flipchart.

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Activity one

Facing challenges

1. How do people become successful?

- Introduce the session by explaining that you're going to work with the group to explore issues of confidence and personal effectiveness and look at some techniques they can use to increase their skills
 - Ask students to draw a picture of someone being successful and annotate this with what they are thinking, doing, saying and feeling. This will help assess students' starting points, tailor teaching accordingly and check progress at the end of the lesson
 - Explain that you're going to start by exploring what factors contribute to personal success
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2. What do you need to be successful?

- **National Autistic Society guidance:** Some autistic students can find group work challenging and can cause high anxiety. You may need to think of this as a reasonable adjustment for the student/s. Avoid pressuring/forcing or judging them. Instead listen, to understand any concerns they may have. Be flexible and prepare before so you can offer options and alternatives – such as working in pairs/smaller groups/assisting or working with the Teacher/Support instead. Also, don't make them feel left out/isolated or assume one way or another – that they can or can't join in – everyone is different and a lot may depend on the environment they are in and how comfortable they feel – so ask them what would be best to do and help them get the best out of the learning.
- Show **slide 2** and ask the students if they know of the Charbrew company. Split the class into groups of 3 or 4 (pairs if numbers are small) and give them the **What were the challenges? student worksheet** and ask them to read through the case study
- Ask them to discuss what skills the founder of the company had to draw on to make his business a success. Please note that a completed copy of the **What were the challenges? student worksheet** has also been included for educator reference on page 6
- Students should identify what the major challenges might have been in starting the business and what techniques and strategies the founder will have used to get things started
- Give the students 10-15 minutes to complete the activity and then ask each group to contribute some ideas to compile on the flipchart. List the challenges identified in one column and the skills needed in another column. Encourage students to think about the difficulties along the business journey and what skills and qualities would be needed to keep going (see completed exemplar)
- In summarising the activity bring out the points that without self-confidence and assertiveness the business owner would not have got the business off the ground. Get groups to share their ideas for solutions with the rest of the class

Activity one

What were the challenges? Exemplar responses

Charbrew

What do you think some of the challenges were for this company in starting up?

What personal skills and qualities do you think Adam Soliman has that helped him overcome the challenges?

Students will come up with some of these responses but not necessarily all. Use the exemplar answer below to introduce discussion points around any they haven't identified in their groups.

Challenges	Skills/strategies needed
No track record in the tea business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used personal story to become better known Unique proposition – In an existing marketplace do something different from competitors – create a storm!
Starting from scratch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did a lot himself – hard working Budget Focused on one big idea Used personal skills, including perseverance, in order to reach the buyers
Inexperienced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made use of what he already knew – business skills from his degree Continual learning: reading, applying skills in different scenarios, listening to others – distinguish the good advice from the bad Looked on project as low risk so didn't fear failing
Lack of finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Started small, not overambitious Found funding where he could (e.g. Get Started grant, awards, family) Lived on a tight budget
Keeping motivated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belief in self and in his product Energy and enthusiasm that rubs off on others Take inspiration – look to other successful people and listen to their stories Staying positive (resilience) – not giving up

See the SEND Self-Confidence lesson (barclayslifeskills.com/educators/lessons/send-self-confidence-lesson) for activities adapted for students with special educational needs and disabilities, on how to overcome challenges.

Activity two

Assertive behaviour

1. What does being assertive mean?



- Show **slide 4** and ask students in small groups or pairs to discuss each term and decide between them on a short definition of each word
- Ask groups to volunteer their definitions on what each word means in terms of personal behaviour. Write up the agreed definitions
- Show **slide 5** to compare definitions
- Explain that skills in being assertive take practice and the ability to be assertive can grow the more experienced we become. If you are self-confident and positive in your approach to life you are more likely to be naturally assertive

2. Examples of assertive behaviour

- Give out the **Examples of behaviours student worksheet** and ask the groups to discuss the different responses in each situation and identify which response falls into each category
- Ask students to think honestly about what they would have done in each situation (they don't need to share this) but explain that thinking about what we do in different circumstances and whether we could have been more assertive in that situation will help us develop that behaviour in the future

3. Practising assertive behaviour

- Give out the **Practising behaviours student worksheet**. These scenarios omit the example for assertive behaviour. Ask the students to read and discuss the passive and aggressive examples and then decide on an appropriate assertive example. They should complete the table, writing in what they would do in each situation
- Ask groups to share their ideas and discuss one contribution from each group

Extension

- Ask students to identify situations where they can practise adopting assertive behaviour, e.g. making a complaint or saying no to something they're being persuaded to do
- Ask students to consider what actions they should take if they are ever told they have behaved too passively or too aggressively, e.g. not telling someone at work you cannot complete something within a desired deadline and subsequently letting someone down, rather than asking if having an extra day is possible. Or giving negative feedback to a colleague which causes upset, rather than providing constructive criticism
- Give them the **Top tips for assertive behaviour student worksheet** so that they can record examples of situations where they need to use assertiveness skills bearing in mind occasions when they may have had feedback about their behaviour being either too passive or too aggressive

Activity two

Assertive behaviour (cont'd)



Activity summary

- Ask the groups to each contribute one top tip that is worth remembering in adopting assertive behaviour. They can use the template on the **Top tips for assertive behaviour student worksheet** to record ideas. Give them some examples of when they might need to be assertive to get them started
- Show them **slide 6** for comparison
- Ask students to revisit the definitions of each term from **slide 4** that they agreed at the start of the activity. Invite them to add further information



Building confidence and assertiveness

Coping with personal challenges – exemplar responses

With a partner or small group discuss each scenario and think about the personal challenges someone might face in each scenario. What personal skills or strategies would they need to draw on to overcome the fears and realise the goals?

Scenario Moving away from home to a new city to start a first job		
Hopes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To do well at work and settle in quickly To make new friends To have some disposable income 	Fears <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not knowing how to do the job Making mistakes Feeling lonely Not managing finances well 	Skills and strategies to help <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out as much about the job as you can before you start Don't be afraid to ask questions and be interested in the work Be friendly and interested in others Write down everything you spend for the first few weeks
Scenario Starting university and moving into halls of residence		
Hopes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make new friends To have lots of fun To enjoy the course 	Fears <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being lonely Not liking the people you share your accommodation with Having to look after yourself Having enough money 	Skills and strategies to help <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go to all the freshers' events and meet as many new people as you can Be interested in others and make friends with those who you have most in common with Write down everything you spend to work out how much you need
Scenario Taking up an opportunity for 3 months' volunteering overseas		
Hopes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To have an adventure To enjoy exploring a new country and culture To be useful to the organisation you will be working with 	Fears <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not understanding (or liking) the culture or climate Not liking the food Finding the work difficult Finding it hard to communicate 	Skills and strategies to help <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about the country you will be visiting before you leave Find out about the local customs and read all the information the organisation gives you Be prepared to try new things Listen to the advice you are given while you are there Embrace the new culture and experience and remind yourself of the positives of the experience if things feel difficult

Building confidence and assertiveness

Case study: what were the challenges?

Charbrew



Adam Soliman founded Charbrew in 2009. Now the company supplies over 3000 stores globally (including UK, North America, China and the Middle East). It started as an idea brewed up in his kitchen through his love of tea drinking and now his company is valued at over £1 million.

With the help of a grant from Blackpool's 'Get Started' Project and support from his family, teamed with his own drive and enthusiasm, Adam realised his ambition of starting his own business at the age of 21. Adam's knowledge and experience from his degree in Business and Accounting helped him set up his business on a sound footing.

With a start-up of £5,000 he paid for his first consignment. He packed these into brown paper bags and drove to farmers' markets where he sold them himself. He focussed on creating new flavours that would appeal to the younger market based on extensive research of both the market and other products available.

"I had no experience in products, innovation or retailing," says Adam, "but I could see what I wanted to achieve and decided to go for it." His biggest challenge, he says, was getting to see the retail buyers. "They are incredibly busy people making multi-million pound decisions and I was a 21-year-old with a box of fruit teas."

Now, aged 25, his lines are stocked by the likes of Tesco, Holland and Barrett, Booths, Lakeland and Ocado.

"You just can't give up," he says. Adam was confident that Charbrew products were what consumers wanted so he kept chasing leads, making calls, driving up and down the country and eventually it paid off. "Seeing your product on the shelves of a retailer like Tesco makes the hard work worth it."

Adam's advice for anyone starting a business is:

- Business opportunities are everywhere you just need to look
- Do the research
- Don't be afraid to start – what's the worst that could happen? It's not all that bad!!
- Start small and focus on one core idea
- Have a story to tell about your business. Real life stories make people connect with brands and the quality of the product makes them buy again
- Use great packaging so that you stand out on the shelf
- Be prepared to put the hours in; there are no shortcuts

Challenges

Skills/strategies needed



Building confidence and assertiveness

Coping with personal challenges

With a partner or small group discuss each scenario and think about the personal challenges someone might face in each scenario. What personal skills or strategies would they need to draw on to overcome the fears and realise the goals?

Scenario

Moving away from home to a new city to start a first job

Hopes	Fears	Skills and strategies to help
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Scenario

Starting university and moving into halls of residence

Hopes	Fears	Skills and strategies to help
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Scenario

Starting university and moving into halls of residence

Hopes	Fears	Skills and strategies to help
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Scenario

Starting university and moving into halls of residence

Hopes	Fears	Skills and strategies to help
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Building confidence and assertiveness

Examples of behaviours

Look at the possible responses to each scenario and decide which category each response matches from passive, assertive or aggressive. Then decide what the possible outcome or consequence might be for each type of response.

Scenario

Arrangements that have been made by someone else but that involve you are inconvenient for you

Tell the arranger you can't attend

Explore all the options with the arranger to see if an alternative can be made

Go along with the arrangement

Passive

Aggressive

Assertive

Possible consequences

Scenario

You are moving out of a rented room and the landlord has withheld your deposit based on damage not done by you

Prepare evidence, explain calmly and negotiate a settlement

Accept the situation, do nothing and lose the deposit as you don't want to argue

Use threatening language and insist on full and immediate payment

Passive

Aggressive

Assertive

Possible consequences



Building confidence and assertiveness

Practising behaviours

Look at the possible responses to each scenario and decide which category each response matches: passive or aggressive. Then consider what the best assertive response would be and write it in the template. Then decide what the possible outcome or consequence might be for each type of response.

Scenario

You have been given a deadline that is impossible to meet

Miss the deadline, refusing to deliver anything because of the unreasonable demands

Hit the deadline by working unreasonable hours and do a poor or unfinished job

Passive

Aggressive

Assertive

Possible consequences

Scenario

You have been criticised for something you feel is not your fault or not justified

You accept the criticism and say nothing

Reject the criticism and say you are right and they are wrong

Passive

Aggressive

Assertive

Possible consequences

Building confidence and assertiveness

Top tips for assertive behaviour

Discuss in your groups some top tips to remember in practising being assertive. First compare your top tips with other groups and add any additional ideas to your list. Then think about some situations where people might need to be assertive and how they could use the tips.

Top tips

Situations where someone of my age/stage in life may need to be assertive
