Assertive, not aggressive

How to say what the problem is and what you want, with respect for both people.

Anger usually has a fair point behind it: something is not OK for me. What matters is how you say it.

Aggressive
Attacks, blames, threatens or humiliates. Gets heard as an attack, so the other person defends or fights back. The message is lost.

Passive
Says nothing, gives in, seethes. The problem stays, resentment builds, and it tends to come out later or sideways.

Assertive
Says clearly what the problem is and what you want, with respect for both people. The best chance of being heard.

The assertive message

1. **Describe** what happened, without judgement. "When the plans changed at the last minute..."
2. **Say how it affected you.** "...I felt frustrated, because I had arranged my day around it."
3. **Ask for what you want.** "Next time, could you let me know the day before?"

How it sounds and looks

Aggressive

- "You always..." "You never..."
- Raised voice, pointing, standing over
- Sarcasm and name-calling
- Aiming to win

Assertive

- "I feel..." "I would like..."
- Steady voice, relaxed posture, eye contact
- Sticking to this one issue
- Aiming to sort it out

Before you speak

- Am I below a 5 out of 10? If not, wait.
- What exactly do I want to happen?
- Is this the right time and place?

Something I need to say. My three sentences: what happened, how it affected me, what I would like.

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