

Making groups work :

some tips for making your team a success

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Group work and academic assertiveness

The principles of academic assertiveness that are presented here should help you, as a learner, to deal better with the issues that tend to arise in working in groups . Being assertive in an academic context means developing the attitude and the skills that help you understand your own behaviour in a group and that of your fellow group members. Academic assertiveness will help you to

- enjoy the team work for this module
- produce a better result for the course work
- increase your chances of a better mark at the end of it.
- improve your employability skills which will help you find an interesting job after graduation.

What it is to be assertive

If you are an assertive person, you ...

- can ask for what you want or need
- can listen to others
- take account of other people's viewpoints
- admit that you have made a mistake
- tolerate other people's mistakes
- can change your mind if necessary
- are open and honest
- are able to stand up for yourself without undue anxiety
- can express feelings reasonably openly
- have reasonable self confidence
- are able to say 'no' without feeling guilty
- can express negative feelings appropriately
- can give and receive constructive criticism
- can deal with unjustified criticism
- can see that it can be all right to express anger sometimes
- normally aim to negotiate and discuss as a first course of action if there is confrontation

Please note that **assertiveness is not aggression**. Very few of us can claim that they keep up with a list like this at all times but we can try. Look at these examples.

Hannah and Marie are working on the development of a short film with three other students who also are friends with each other. Hannah and Marie are fairly quiet and they tend to discuss the work that they are doing with each other because they feel somewhat daunted by the other three who are more boisterous. It is one of the others, for example, who has dictated who should be doing what – and his friends clearly look up to him as the leader. Under his leadership they are, as a group, not making much progress. Hannah has been learning about assertiveness, while Marie

said it was not for her. The situation bothers Hannah because she can see what is going on. She decides that she should do something about it, though she has not been in the habit of speaking out in the past. In the next meeting of the group, instead of sitting quietly while the 'leader' dictates what they should do, Hannah takes a step forward and says

'Look, I realise that I have not been saying much up to now – just following along with your decisions – but we are not being all that successful in this work are we? Perhaps we need to think again about how we are making the decisions'.

The others are surprised, but actually Hannah has echoed what has been in their minds. Marie is astonished at her friend. She is horrified at her daring at first, but as the group re-forms and begins to function in a more effective way, she starts to admire Hannah's action.

Jem has finished the essay that needs to be handed in tomorrow. Tod has not done his yet. He comes round to see Jem, chats for a while over a coffee and then asks Jem if he can have a look at his completed essay 'Like- just so as I can get some ideas', he says. Jem is not naïve. He knows that Tod wants to use his references and probably to copy some of the ideas or structure. He says 'No'.

Tod says 'I thought you were a friend. I've left this a bit late and am in trouble with it and you're not going to help. Thanks Mate!' He picks up his coat and walks out. Jem feels pangs of guilt and he is sad but he knows that he has made the right decision.

How assertive are you? What do you think of Hannah's and Jem's behaviour?

It is important to recognize that others have the right to be assertive too. This is illustrated in the example below.

Pedro agrees to meet with his group in the library to discuss some work that they are doing together. He forgets to come to the meeting. It is particularly annoying for the group because they needed to allocate the areas of work to everyone. They forgive his mistake. A little while later in the course of the work, Sam forgets a meeting with Pedro. Pedro is inclined to be irritated, but recalls that he was forgiven.

Don't forget that you can only change your own behaviour – not that of others.

Amy is in the second year of a graphics degree. She is working in a group on the development of a poster that promotes a new brand of cat food. The group has been criticised for their slow progress before and they are dragging their heels again.

Amy is very frustrated and is anxious to get on. She tries and tries to hurry her colleagues and gets frustrated again. Then she realises that all she can do is to work hard herself. She cannot change the behaviour of the others.

Remember: if you act assertively, you often give others the chance to change their behaviour in ways that may be helpful to the.

In the example above, Amy now stops trying to cajole the others in the group to hurry and quietly gets on herself. To her surprise, with the pressure off (they called it 'nagging'), several of the others, without any comment, start to get down to the project and they seem to want to become more serious about it.

Sometimes assertive action may be withdrawal. Here is an example:

Selema is a mature student on a politics degree. She has worked in a political organisation. She knows that she can speak more fluently and in a more sophisticated manner than other students, many of whom have fairly recently left school. In seminars, though she longs to dive into the depths of discussions, she recognises that she needs to hold back in order not to dominate the situation and, in effect, to make others feel inadequate.

Can you think of a time when you have withdrawn from a situation in an assertive manner as in the example of Selema?

Being assertive is not being aggressive, non-assertive or manipulative...

In order to understand better what assertiveness is, it is helpful to think about what it is not. **It is not aggression or manipulation.** Most of us behave in all of these ways sometimes, but we should work towards predominantly being assertive. There are examples of these behaviours in a chart that follows the description of the three types.

Non-assertion is usually exemplified by the person who is indecisive, apologetic and complaining. It is sometimes called 'people pleasing behaviour'. You can, of course, sometimes be indecisive because you need time or more information to make an appropriate judgement and that is fine. The non-assertive person often has a 'victim' mentality, clinging on to her stories of how life is hard on her. For example, do you recognise these ways of starting a conversation? They are indicative of non-assertive behaviour.

- I do hope you don't mind if I say this, but, well...
- I am sorry to say this. It is really very good, of course, but...

The non-assertive person tends not to speak up when her rights are infringed , but will go and moan to friends. Non-assertive friends will just ‘take it’ and then probably feel unhappy about being ‘used’ later – and then they moan to others. More assertive friends are likely to listen at first then suggest that there are more appropriate things to do than whine! Non-assertive behaviour also involves not liking to ask for help from appropriate sources when it is needed. In a seminar, it is unlikely that a non-assertive person will volunteer an opinion unless spoken to.

To summarise - if you are behaving in a non-assertive or people-pleasing manner, you:

- hope that you will get what you want
- hope that others will guess what you want
- try to please people

You do not:

- ask for what you want express your feelings openly
- upset anyone if you can possibly help it – and if you do, you probably blame yourself

Areas of work	Examples of non-assertive behaviour in this area of work
Exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you are terrified and the emotion gets in the way of your ability to perform (we all get anxious about exams and you need to learn to relax and you should seek help if necessary) - you are terrified and the emotion gets in the way of your ability to perform (we all get anxious about exams and you need to learn to relax and you should seek help if necessary)
Seminars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -you give a seminar paper in a quiet voice, not looking at the audience and not expressing yourself - you say ‘I cannot be bothered to prepare for the session. It is boring’ and then you do not get involved with any discussion (but you cannot anyway can you – you are not prepared!)
Attendance at a lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the lecture is printed out in reasonable detail on the web. You may attend it, but do not listen very much because you say ‘I can get it afterwards’. You do not print it out but moan that you do not understand the topic later
Peer and self assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - your general attitude is that your tutors are being employed to teach you and therefore should not be asking you to ‘do their work’ of assessing (and actually you find assessing yourself or your peers difficult) - you have done a good piece of work and you know it, but you do not like to give yourself a good mark in self assessment (‘It looks ‘bad’, you say) - in a situation of peer assessment, your friend has done a poor piece of work and you feel you cannot give it the mark you feel it deserves as your friend might find out that it was you
Group work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -you have managed to get into a group for a project in which there are several students who are ‘on the ball’ with regards to the current task. You feel pleased and settle back to listen, saying to yourself ‘I don’t know anything, just tell me what to do’ - your group is not doing very well in a group task (lasting over two weeks). You all get low marks, and you tell your other friends that it is because you ended up with a dumb group
Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -you make an excuse for not doing well (saying you were not feeling well) when you knew that you did not learn the material sufficiently - you have not revised for the test and you ring in to your tutor and say you are ill
Small research projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -things went wrong in the survey and instead of giving a critical account of the things that went wrong, you make up a set of results - your work did not go well so you borrow the notes of a friend saying you just want to see how she has written up the work and you copy them

On-line discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - your tutor has said that the idea of the dedicated chat room is that you should be able to learn from your peers. You look at the discussion, but you feel that you have not got anything to say and do not engage with it - you are asked to read a given piece of text and then to comment on it in at least two postings. You read the text and seek out two minor issues in order to make the required number of postings
Essays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you discuss the essay title that you have been given with your friends. They talk of ways of tackling the essay and you go home and write it on that basis. You get low marks and blame them. In the end, they chose different titles on which to write - you know that your English is not very good in the essay that you have written (you are not dyslexic). You ask your husband to improve it for you. He offers to show you where it could be written better and you say – ‘oh no, just do it’. You hand in the corrected version without looking at it again
Presentation of yourself in a CV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you have been asked to write a CV in a careers session. You have little confidence in yourself and the CV reads as a listing of educational qualifications and a few holiday jobs. It has no ‘personality’
Critical review of an academic paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you do not like to make critical comments about a published academic paper (‘I am only a student...how can I be in a position to criticise this paper by an academic’) - there is a point that you could make that you are pretty sure is justified but since there are several more superficial points, you make them instead and do not take the risk
Placement experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you are in a placement that you did not choose. You do the minimum that you have to do in the current placement but are clearly not interested and you blame this on the placement not being your preferred choice

Aggression in assertiveness training is usually described as 'going for what one wants without taking account of the needs or rights of others' – a fairly broad definition. It might be illustrated in the academic context by the person who pursues her point with a loud voice, who takes an aggressive stance or does not listen to other points of view. Aggression is not always 'loud' though. Sarcasm is aggressive because it is designed to put someone down to the advantage of the perpetrator and there are quiet people who do not say much, but when they speak, there is an uncomfortable edge. More generally you could say that if a person with aggressive tendencies feels threatened, she will tend to go for attack rather than negotiation – and she will often over-react.

Aggressive people may sometimes seem to be those who have got their act together, who seem confident and 'sorted'. That is what they want you to see. Often they are not sure of themselves, and the more they act aggressively, the more difficult it is for them to do what they need to do, such as ask for help or find a shoulder to cry on when difficult situations arise. Like non-assertion, aggression is expressed through much more than words alone.

In aggressive behaviour, you are likely to:

- try to get what you want in any way that works regardless of the feelings of others

- You may threaten, cajole, be sarcastic or fight or ridicule

You do not:

- see that others have a right to have their needs met

- seek situations in which you could both get your needs met

- negotiate

Manipulative behaviour is an effort to achieve goals in a covert manner. It also does not take account of the rights of others and for this reason it is often described as a kind of aggressive behaviour. However some of the characteristics of a manipulative person are those of

non-assertion such as not being indirect and not being open. It is as if the manipulator cannot manage the direct approach and therefore 'goes behind others' backs. An example of manipulative behaviour is to lead another into showing weaknesses in order that the other can be put down. Equally, manipulative behaviour may involve 'sucking up' to someone so that the manipulator is favoured. People who are excessively patronising can be manipulators because they want to maintain an air of dominance and superiority without being open and honest and involved in an interaction of equals.

In manipulative behaviour,

- you do not state directly and openly what you want, but try to get what you want in any way that works without care for the rights or feelings of others

- use underhand communications as a means of achieving what you want. It is not an honest interaction

You will work to achieve this behind people's backs because you do not want to face them openly. They cannot therefore have their needs met because you are not being straight with them.

In contrast to aggressive and non-assertive behaviour, **assertive behaviour** is confident, open, direct and honest and appropriate. The assertive person does not violate the rights of others, but recognises that she has responsibilities to them. She does not expect others to know magically what she wants and she does not freeze up with anxiety. If her communication is affected by anxiety, she may well say that this is how she feels. That is fine.

This section might have led you to think about how assertive or not you are (remember that we are all mixtures of behaviours). We learn assertive behaviours from family and friends and a bit of genetic potential.

Who or what has been influential on your behaviour?

The chart below gives examples of assertive, non-assertive, aggressive and manipulative behaviour. You can cover the third column and see if you can identify what behaviour is happening.

Context	What is said	Nature of comment (ass, non-ass, agg, man)
A friend wanders up and admires your new jeans without looking at them and then says...	'and...you got that book that we need from the library didn't you...you wouldn't mind letting me have a little time at it would you?'	man
You are just coming out of a seminar. You have taken part in the discussion in a reasonable manner. One of your colleagues says to you facetiously,	'You don't say much in seminars do you?'	agg
You have just been given an essay title for the current module. A friend says,	'You're lucky, you got notes for all of the lectures. I missed the important one when I was ill and I really do need to see what was said don't I...you write so clearly...'	man
Sam has run out of milk for the third time this week and he comes knocking on your door asking to 'borrow' some. You say	'Sam, this has happened very recently. I do not want to give you any this time'.	ass
Sophie asks you if you will be in college for the lecture tomorrow. You say:	'Stop asking where I'm going to be all the time. If you see me there, I am there. If not, I am not'.	agg
Jason is finishing an essay. He comes into the kitchen moaning.	'I can't do essays. I am slow and useless at writing. I can never sort out how to end them...I was never taught how to do these things.'	non-ass
You are in the café and have just bought a latte. You wait a moment and go to drink it and it is cold. You take it back to the counter and say loudly,	'This place is seriously run down. The coffee is cold - are you going to get me a hot one or not? By the way I am not coming here again.'	agg
You are in the refectory at lunch time and have jacket potato with cheese. Unfortunately melted cheese has obscured a large section of the potato that is black and inedible. You push the whole potato onto the side of the plate and then push the plate away, dejectedly saying,	'They use the cheapest of ingredients here. After all, we're only students – they do what they like... There's no point in complaining to them, they will just do it again and again.'	non-ass
Your tutor is commenting on a draft for an essay. He says that you have made a good start. You are not used to compliments and you just look down and mumble,	'I suppose it was all right.'	non-ass

The display of behaviour

You display assertiveness in many ways. I am going to divide them into three for convenience – the qualities of speech and voice, body language and ‘whole person’ factors which are broadly about how you display yourself in space. The display of behaviour is mediated or determined, of course, by what goes on inside behaviour – the thought, emotion and self confidence and we will have a brief look at that in the section after this.

Speech and voice: Being assertive goes far beyond words themselves. I use an example to illustrate this. Jane has asked Markus if he will come with her to see a new film that is on. Markus says:

‘No, I won’t come with you. I have other things to do today’.

Is Markus being assertive or not? Well – he might be being assertive – simply saying that he does not want to come. In this case, his voice would be friendly and relaxed and he might add suggestions as to others whom Jane might ask. On the other hand, supposing he says (with italicized emphases) in an altogether harder manner:

‘No, I won’t come *with* you. I have *other things* to do today’.

Then you could probably interpret his response as aggressive. He might be using aggressive intonation to counter persistent nagging by Jane. He could also put a manipulative connotation into the manner in which he uses his words:

‘No, I won’t come *with* you. I have *other things* to do today’.

We might interpret this as a double message that he is not saying directly to Jane. He might be trying to tell Jane (but not directly), that he would go with someone else, but not her. Further he might be manipulative if he says:

‘No, I won’t come with you. I have *other things* to do today’.

Here he is not telling Jane directly why he will not come to the cinema with her – but he is hinting that he has something to do that supersedes her suggestion. In effect he is putting her offer down but is indirectly inviting her to show interest in what those ‘other things’ might be.

Words alone do not carry the message of assertiveness. There is much more to it. Speech differs in intonation, speed of delivery, the flow (hesitant or smooth), loudness and in the management of silence. All these factors contribute to messages you give to others about your state of assertion, aggression, non-assertion or your manipulative intentions. How much is said is another indicator – people can aggressively dominate a situation by saying a lot, or can ‘wither on’ non-assertively.

Bodies and their language: You, as a human being, will already have a huge ability to ‘read’ others’ behaviour and to learn more from it in order to fine-tune your own behaviour.

Assertive behaviours are indicated in:

- posture and the angle of the head

- the nature of eye-contact or lack of it evidence of the attention paid to another person

facial expression and facial gestures that are not related to the communication

breathing rate

the quality and degree of the movements and body gestures – dramatic or slow, smooth movements or ‘jabbing’ movements, tight or expansive gestures or no movement

stray movements that may be unrelated to the communication (eg rocking or perpetual fidgeting)

general level of confidence portrayed in many ways

the use of touch – and so on

‘Saggy’ people usually look non-assertive and in the same way you could say that assertive people hold themselves up to the world. The facial expression of an assertive person is attentive, bright and open. An aggressive face has sharpened features. Breathing rate is another way in which we display how we are feeling – but again it will be ‘read’ in relation to other signs. A person will breathe quickly when she is aggressive – ready for fight; but also when she is being non-assertive and frightened – ready for flight – as well when she has just been running! Then there is the quality of body gestures – a person might be rigid (‘frightened rigid’), tight and immobile, or expansive, with arm movements that open away from the body – a movement that might describe trust and openness. The aggressor may use more dramatic gestures that have weight behind them or symbolize actual violence (thumping the table or jabbing the air). Sometimes gestures can indicate how a person really is when the words that are being said suggest some other state. For example, they may be demonstrating tension in clenched fist or tight lips. Then there are other give-away gestures. It is difficult to be assertive and clear if you are restless and fidgeting or constantly tapping a foot or hand or biting fingernails. These are the gestures of a non-assertive or sometimes of an aggressive person.

You also display assertiveness in **‘whole body’ non- verbal communications** which involve spatial factors. Examples are whole body movement – stepping nearer, or away from the other etc; the use of personal space – one’s own and responses to others’ personal space; relative positions and heights – sitting, standing and so on.

In a situation in which you want to display assertive behaviour, it is often worth shifting a little forward towards the other. For example, if you are a customer at the counter in a coffee bar, making a point about a cup of cold coffee that you have just bought then putting a hand flat on the counter in front of you, firmly but not forcefully, establishes your presence and

‘says’ something like ‘I am going to make my point here’. This example also has something to do with territory and personal space. It is often non-assertive people who get their judgements of personal space ‘wrong’. Standing up very close to someone else – in her personal space – can be a tactic of an aggressor (deliberately unsettling the other) or the ‘mis-reading’ of social situations by a person who is often non-assertive – as well as of a lover. However, you should also be aware that there are often cultural habits and practices involved here too.

The clothing that you wear can influence how you feel about yourself and the power that you feel you have in particular situations, and it can influence how others respond to you before you even open your mouth.

How do you choose clothes for particular situations? What clothing makes you feel more assertive?

What goes on inside behaviour

This is an enormous topic of course and I cannot do justice to it in this small section. If you want to read more on this, look at the book on academic assertiveness in which there is a whole chapter devoted to dealing with thoughts (Moon, 2009). All I will do here is to remind you of some situations in which you may find yourself more or less assertive, or different from what is usual for you. Here is a list:

- being in love
- other times of extreme excitement when stressed about coursework, or examinations or deadlines
- situations of competitiveness
- situations of failure or serious disappointments
(eg about grades)
- situations of negative feedback or criticism that you cannot cope with
- when you do not know what is expected of you simply feeling 'down' – eg the time of a period or you are ill or sad
- feeling you are on the wrong course and unsure whether or how to change things
- when you have a big decision to make...and so on

Remember that there is much more detail in books but that there are counsellors attached to the college or university who can help in these areas.

The influence of environment – people and things

Place, atmosphere, different groups of people and your history with them all influence the assertiveness that you can display. Think of how your family is with regard to assertive behaviour; how you are with your family, your friends at home, your university friends. Who are those with whom you are not so comfortable? Why?

Think also of the influence of the atmosphere of a place, and the way in which furniture is arranged. This can be an important issue in the success of group work. How close to each other you sit, whether you are sitting forward, or are easing back in soft chairs, whether you are all at the same height – all these things can influence how assertive you can be and how the group will work. Imagine an interview when you have been told to sit on a chair that is lower than those of the interviewers...what is the feeling?

Trying to disregard the influence of the tutor/lecturer, can you think of some rooms that seem to facilitate interaction in seminars or tutorials and some rooms that discourage interaction? Can you put your finger on why that is?

Think of some of the rooms in which you have seminars or tutorials. Where would you sit in order to feel you had the most 'voice'. Where would you sit if you wanted to be least involved

Rights

You have rights! The list of rights below, is not very different from those in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948 – the United Nations document is reprinted in Alberti and Emmons (1982)). The rights more or less spell out what it should be to be a dignified human being – and they apply importantly in academic contexts. There is more than just rights to consider here, however. If a person expects her rights to be upheld, then she should take on the responsibility to respect the rights of others to fulfil *their* rights – so always I am really talking of rights *and* responsibilities. It is also important to recognise that there are different attitudes to rights in different cultures, religions and racial and other human group memberships. These different attitudes need to be respected. Another point is that when you engage in activities like being a student, you forgo some of your rights (eg to be totally in control of your time) in order to get what you want (a degree, we assume).

The list of rights that I give you here has been selected and worded to fit with the context of being a student. You will see that many of the rights have a direct link to the definition of academic assertiveness given at the beginning of this booklet.

Rights are listed over the page to prompt your thought. You do not have to uphold your rights and sometimes it can be an assertive act, after consideration, to forego your rights. You will see from the examples that upholding rights is not always straight-forward – but it does help to be aware that you have them!

List of rights with relevance to academic and general situations

You have a right to be respected as equal as a human being to other human beings, and as intelligent and capable;

Emma is dyslexic and tends to be slow at writing and gets special help. Students are asked to form into groups to conduct an experiment in the lab. Emma has lots of friends, but she finds that even her friends do not seem to want to choose her as a group member and she assumes that it is because she is dyslexic. This has always been the case when she has worked in groups and she has to be very strong to talk her way into a group on the basis of her practical abilities.

You have a right to be treated as a person independently of any role that you may carry;

You are a person first and not a role. An employer who is contemplating taking you on as an employee says: 'Students are useless at doing this sort of job – they think too hard and then complain. If you are a student, sorry, I won't take you on.' You tell him that there is much more to you than the fact that you are a student.

You have a right to maintain control over your body, the things that you own and your time;

Jamie is fit, but overweight. He is doing a PGCE (teacher training) to be a PE teacher. There is some pressure from tutors for him to lose weight as he will not be a good role model for children in schools... What are the issues about rights here? It is not a straight-forward situation.

You do not need to justify or excuse your own reasonable behaviour;

Dan feels that he must go and see his mother at home. She is ill and on her own. He has thought hard about the visit as he is a member of a group that is working on a project in architecture. When he says he will be missing two meetings this week and gives the reason, the others grumble that he is letting the group down. Dan simply tells them that he realises that he is causing a problem to the group, but that he has thought it through and that this is the right thing for him to do.

You have a right to say 'yes' or 'no' for yourself;

Pete is ill and not in the university for a day or two. The group is not doing too well and members are offered support as individuals and they agree for extra support specifically for Pete without asking him. He is not pleased when he comes back in. He would like to have been asked. They could have texted him.

You can ask for what you want (though, of course, you should accept the right of the other to decline your request);

Ali is aware that she has asked for help from her tutor on a number of occasions – and she needs more help but does not like to ask...

You can decline to care about something or – within reason – can decline to take responsibilities for dealing with the needs or problems of others;

Kerry keeps grumbling to her housemates about the bad time she is having on her English Literature degree. She keeps asking Kate to look over her work for grammatical errors. Kate has had enough and one day, says 'No'.

You have a right to be different. You can have needs or express opinions and values that are different from those of others;

Andy is on a Media Studies programme and is in a group that is jointly reviewing a film. He feels that some of the views of his group are racially prejudiced – but he is the only one to sense this. He says that he will go along with the group in order that they can progress, but would like to put a disclaimer on the final version of the project, saying why he disagrees.

You have a right to privacy, solitude and independence.

Jules is in a shared house. She has a dissertation to get in at the end of the week – and it is the birthday of one of her housemates. There is a lot of pressure on her to come out for the night, but she knows that she must get on with her work. She tells them firmly that she will not come out and quietly but firmly shuts her door when they start grumbling about her.

You have a right to say that you do not understand something or do not know something and you have a right to ask for clarification;

Joseph is on a Public Relations programme. He is in a group that is working on setting up a conference. The group is being given instructions by the tutor who is managing the project. Joseph keeps asking for clarification of various points. The others start taunting him and Jon says 'Let's just get on with it – come on Joseph, we understand, we'll tell you'. Joseph insists on asking more. He says he needs to understand properly for himself.

You can make a mistake, though you would expect to take responsibility for it;

Carrie is usually reliable but this time she forgot to write up her part of a group project. She makes many excuses and the group know that the excuses are false and that makes them get more fed up with her. Dan says 'Why don't you just say that you made a mistake'. Carrie says 'OK, I apologise, I made a mistake'. The matter is put to rest.

You can change your mind but again, you may have consequences to accept;

Students in a shared flat have agreed to hold a party for Teri's birthday. It is to be a fancy dress party and Teri cannot make up her mind as to whether to go for 'What you were wearing when the Titanic went down' or 'On the beach...'. She chooses first one and then the other and her flatmates are getting fed up with her indecision. They need to find appropriate clothes this weekend

As a human being, you have a right sometimes to fail at endeavours.

There has been a group assessment in the journalism module. There is one mark given to the group and the group to which Adam belongs has not got good marks. The feedback is that the element of work for which Adam was responsible is not good. Adam is deeply ashamed and feels an utter failure. However, he apologises to the group, reflects on why his work was so poor and puts it behind him.

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