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In her book *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*, author Susan Cain describes the environment we are living in as the "extravert ideal." This means that society seems to value outgoing magnetic personality traits in individuals. Children are encouraged to "put themselves out there" and having a very large social network has become the benchmark for being "well rounded." While human connection is essential, sometimes this eagerness to engage in social situations can turn into aggressively trying to force our own opinions on others.

Dr. Vivek Murthy, US Surgeon General, describes a phenomenon called "motive attribution asymmetry" in his book *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World*. Motive attribution asymmetry is where we believe that our actions and beliefs are based on love and moral honor while anyone who disagrees with us is acting out of hate. It can be easy to assume the worst about someone who disagrees with us. Passing judgment or defining someone as "bad" because they disagree with you, then using this judgment to attempt to force your own view is a form of aggressive behavior.

Many struggle to understand the difference between being assertive and being aggressive. Aggressiveness is often associated with being pushy, brash or annoying. Aggressive people often show a strong need to dominate. Sometimes they appear to be gearing up for a fight. Behaving in an aggressive way intrudes on other people's rights to earn respect and retain dignity, express opinions honestly and ask for what they need. Assertiveness is stating your position in a clear confident way while still respecting others. Those who are assertive are able to express themselves honestly and courteously, stand up for their rights AND respect the rights of others.

One way we can make sure we stay on the assertive side of interacting with others and not slide over to aggression is by working to improve our social connections. Healthy relationships help keep us from feeling suspicious of those who are different from us and allow us to more easily connect to our shared humanity through kindness and giving the benefit of the doubt. Resources for improving relationships can be found at extension.usu.edu/relationships/. A second way to promote assertiveness is to work on our own confidence. People who are confident trust their own abilities and skills and feel less threatened by others having a different opinion. Tools you can use to help build your own confidence can be found by following [usuextension.confidenceproject](https://www.instagram.com/usuextension.confidenceproject) on Instagram.