

Some examples: Why don't we behave assertively naturally?

1. As young children we received certain messages from parents or other authoritative roles i.e. primary caregivers/teachers/cultural upbringing etc. who showed disapproval of our thoughts, feelings &/or behaviour. As Children we feel a need for belonging (it keeps us safe and loved) & so to 'belong' & gain approval we squash our own feelings.

The messages received might for e.g be in the form 'Punishment' (which can be overt, e.g. withdrawn affection), we're made to feel 'wrong' – 'wrong thoughts', 'wrong feelings', 'wrong choices' – we are not validated, instead we are disapproved of.

For example: Parent "how can you be unhappy, I just bought you a new bike" – an external denial of our internal feelings and so to correct this discord/discomfort we learn to not listen to or trust our feelings. If the child was assertive they could answer "yes, it's lovely bike and I feel unhappy". Rather, as children we learn that feelings (which are not controllable) are not OK. Same thing can happen with ideas &/or thoughts. Thus we learn that in order to get approval we may need to deny what we really feel, think, (opinion, ideas, attitude etc..) as well as change associated behaviour.

2. Schools may reward quite obedient children. Opinion-giving & questioning child not rewarded (teacher not 'bad' just too many kids to address the different behaviours directly). Child may learn to stay quiet to 'please' people.
3. Cultural upbringing - some cultures for e.g. encourage submissive behaviour from women e.g. lower eyes as a mark of respect when talking to someone older or male of any age., & so female is encouraged to drop hints ~ manipulate - to get needs met.