



Assertiveness

ASSERTIVENESS is a healthy way of acting/communicating in any situation. When you are acting/communicating assertively, you:

Express your feelings

Ask for what you want

Say no to what you don't want

Assertiveness also means that you are standing up for your rights and expressing them in a non-threatening, direct, clear manner. Assertiveness is a skillful way to act and can lead to you being happier in your interactions with others as well as helping you improve your relationships. There are three other ways that people tend to act/communicate, and these are generally ineffective ways of being understood and getting your needs met.

Here are some less effective communication styles that you might recognize:

PASSIVE COMMUNICATION – This is when you:

- Avoid saying what you want or need
- Apologize for your needs
- Avoid conflict, put your own needs aside (i.e., people pleasing)

The result of passivity is that you could be ignored, disappointed, or feel that you are not important. Feelings of anger, resentment, and loneliness can result.

PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION – This is when you:

- Avoid saying what you want or need, or are unclear in communicating what you need
- Blame others for not understanding what you need or want; blaming is done indirectly so that the person being blamed feels a sense of guilt, confusion (you may act like a “victim” or “martyr”)

The results of passive-aggressive communication can be that you don't get your needs met or relationships with others can be affected negatively because others may not understand what you really want or feel. Because of this, passive-aggressive communication often leads to difficulty in relationships.

AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION – This is when you:

- Say what you want, think, and feel without considering how it affects the other person
- You might speak in a demanding, disrespectful manner towards the other person or present yourself as superior to them
- You might disregard another person's opinion or speak to them with a dismissive tone

The result of aggressive communication can be getting your way but at others' expense. This impacts your ability to maintain healthy relationships with others, who feel they have been treated poorly or unfairly.

Here are some ways to begin practicing assertive communication:

1. Identify what you want/need/feel. You have a right to those wants, needs, and feelings.
2. Speak nondefensively, in a calm manner. Be mindful of the tone and volume of your voice.
3. Use “I statements” – take responsibility for your own thoughts, feelings, and needs.
4. Listen carefully to others, and respond to them only after considering their point of view. Be aware that there are many different opinions. Agree to disagree.
5. Pay attention to your nonverbal behavior. Make good eye contact without staring.
6. Maintain open posture. Face the person directly, give appropriate space, but do not back off. Do not cross arms or legs which could appear defensive. Place your hands on your lap or arms by your side.
7. When making requests, be clear and specific about what you want/need. Ask for what you need. **INSTEAD OF:** “You never clean up in our room”, **TRY:** “I would appreciate if we could both try keeping our room neat.”
8. Know that you have a right to say no. Setting limits on demands for your time, involvement, or energies is an important skill to have or to learn.
9. “Check for understanding.” This means restating what you have heard and asking additional clarifying questions. For example, “Did I understand you correctly when you said....”



Sources:

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