

Assertiveness is a *Communication* Skill!

Communication enables us to let people know what we need or want and to build better relationships with other people. There are different communication styles that people use. We learn how to communicate from having relationships with others. Some communication styles are clearly unhealthy, while other styles are healthier to use at different times. When we are effective communicators – we use our words, our bodies, our voices and our actions to send a very clear picture of who we are and what we want.

Passive people . . .

are silent
let others lead them
don't stick up for themselves
make excuses
give up easily
defer to others
let others make decisions
can be a victim

Being passive all the time is an unhealthy way to communicate, because continually passive people don't get their needs or wants met. Other people make decisions for them – and this might not be the decision the person really wants. Others often might take advantage of passive people.

Aggressive people . . .

act tough
yell, scream, accuse, interrupt
are controlling
demand
need to win
are always right
can be abusive

Aggressiveness is also an unhealthy way to communicate because it is very one-sided. Aggressive people don't build healthy relationships because other people get tired of the way they are being treated by aggressive people. Aggressive people do not care about others, but rather about themselves. It is important to note that anger itself is not "bad" – it can inform us, guide us and help to keep us safe. Rage, on the other hand, causes out of control, aggressive behavior and is very unhealthy.

Assertive people . . .

stand up for themselves
stand up for others
express their needs and wants
use "i" statements
are honest
know boundaries
listen to themselves
listen to others
have follow-through
look for solutions

Characteristics of *Assertiveness*

Assertiveness is both **verbal** and **non-verbal**. It includes:

- Saying “No” or “yes” firmly
- Shaking the head
- Keeping the shoulders back, head up, feet planted solidly on the ground
- Looking the other person in the eye
- Repeating the word “no” or “yes” as often as necessary

Assertiveness in the healthiest way to communicate. Assertive people take care of themselves, as well as take others into consideration. Healthy relationships develop through “give and take.” Passive people just give. Aggressive people just take. Assertive people give and take. When assertive, we establish boundaries for ourselves and for others. When someone tries to cross those boundaries, we can recognize it and stand up for ourselves. If we are passive, the “boundary crosser” will not stop. If we act aggressively, we might create a more dangerous situation or ruin the relationship. When we act aggressively, we can respond calmly, but firmly.

Assertiveness is something that has to be learned and practiced. If practiced in everyday situation, it will be easier for us to be assertive in more serious or critical times. Since we learned how to be passive or aggressive, we can learn how to be **assertive**.

How do “I”-Messages help the sender? “I”-messages help the sender to:

- State his/her feelings without blaming the other person.
- Objective to receiver’s actions without causing anger or defensiveness.
- Offer a chance to correct an injustice or unfairness without causing long-term damage to the relationship.

How do “I”-Messages help the Receiver? “I”-messages help the receiver to:

- Get non-judgmental feedback on how his/her actions affect the sender.
- Understand the sender’s feelings.
- Respond to the sender’s objections without feeling blamed or attacked.
- Feel respected.

Look, Listen, Ask and Encourage

Look

Eye Contact
Body Language

Listen

Tone of Voice
Word Choice

Ask

Questions to Clarify
Paraphrases

Encourage

Nodding
Smiling

Benefits of Being Assertive

- People respect you and know that you mean what you say.
- You are able to resist pressure from other people.
- You feel good about yourself: honest, less anxious, more self-esteem.
- Other people are less likely to take advantage of you.
- You are more likely to get what you want and need without hurting anyone else.

Try it!! The more you do it, the easier it gets!!