

Understanding Passive, Assertive, and Aggressive Behaviors

Passive Behaviors	Assertive Behaviors	Aggressive Behaviors
Being afraid to speak up	Speaking openly but without interrupting or disrespecting others	Interrupting and talking over others
Speaking softly	Using a conversational tone	Speaking loudly
Avoiding looking at people	Making good eye contact	Glaring and staring at others
Showing little or no expression	Showing expressions that match the message (honest and direct but still respectful and not intimidating)	Intimidating others through use of expressions
Slouching and withdrawing	Relaxing and adopting an open stance and expressions, not invading others' personal space but demonstrating engagement rather than withdrawal from the interaction	Standing rigidly, crossing arms, invading the personal space of others
Isolating yourself from groups	Participating in groups	Controlling groups
Agreeing with others despite your personal feelings	Expressing your feelings honestly but respectfully and considering the feelings of others; keeping to the point	Considering only your own feelings and/or making demands of others
Valuing yourself less than others	Valuing yourself equal to others	Valuing yourself more than others
Hurting yourself to avoid hurting others	Trying to hurt no one (including yourself)	Hurting others to avoid being hurt
Not reaching goals for fear of hurting/inconveniencing others; perhaps not even having goals, and simply doing as others suggest	Having goals of your own and generally reaching those goals without hurting others	Reaching goals but hurting others in the process

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Think of friends or family who often act passively. What behaviors or actions make these people seem passive? Why do you think they might choose to communicate this way? How might this be an inadequate approach to communication?

Think of friends or family who often act aggressively. What behaviors or actions make them seem aggressive? Why do you think they might choose to communicate this way? How might this be an inadequate approach to communication?

Why might assertive communication be a better option than passive or aggressive? What could be the benefits?