Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Communication

Passive Communication

During passive communication, a person prioritizes the needs, wants, and feelings of others, even at their own expense. The person does not express their own needs, or does not stand up for them. This can lead to being taken advantage of, even by well-meaning people who are unaware of the passive communicator's needs and wants.

- Soft spoken / quiet
- Allows others to take advantage
- Prioritizes needs of others
- Poor eye contact / looks down or away
- Does not express one's own needs or wants
- Lack of confidence

Aggressive Communication

Through aggressive communication, a person expresses that only their own needs, wants, and feelings matter. The other person is bullied, and their needs are ignored.

- Easily frustrated
- Speaks in a loud or overbearing way
- Unwilling to compromise
- Use of criticism, humiliation, and domination
- Frequently interrupts or does not listen
- Disrespectful toward others

Assertive Communication

Assertive communication emphasizes the importance of *both* peoples' needs. During assertive communication, a person stands up for their own needs, wants, and feelings, but also listens to and respects the needs of others. Assertive communication is defined by confidence, and a willingness to compromise.

- Listens without interruption
- Clearly states needs and wants
- Willing to compromise
- Stands up for own rights
- Confident tone / body language
- Good eye contact

Examples

Scenario	A friend asks to borrow your car. This will be a big inconvenience for you.
Passive	Umm, yeah, I guess that's fine. Do you need me to fill the tank?
Aggressive	No way! Why would I let you borrow my car? You're crazy to even ask.
Assertive	I need my car that day, but I'll have time to drop you off.

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Practice

Scenario	Your boss asks you to stay late, while everyone else leaves. You're always the one who stays late, and tonight you have plans.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

Scenario	Your partner left a mess in the kitchen, and you're too busy to clean.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

Scenario	You're at a restaurant, and the server brought you the wrong dish.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

Scenario	A friend showed up at your house uninvited. Usually you would be happy to let them in, but this time you're busy.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

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