

Communications styles

Passive, aggressive and assertive are all types of communication styles that share common characteristics under each title. How a person communicates is not fixed, for example, a person may be assertive with a close friend but be passive with strangers.¹

	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Basic belief of worthiness	"I am not worthy." "Other people are more important than me"	"We are both worthy" "We are equally as important as each other"	"You are not worthy." "I'm more important than others"
Body language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quiet tone • eyes pointing downward or away • shoulders hunched together • fidgeting feet and hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • firm but respectful tone • relaxed appearance • appropriate eye contact • appropriate gestures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loud or angry tone • staring or overly direct eye contact • pointing, clenched fist, dramatic movements
Communication/ Language style	Apologetic, submissive, vague, self-deprecating.	Confident, relaxed, firm, polite, respectful.	Insulting, sarcastic, patronising, and disrespectful.
Emotions and feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel taken advantage of • feel unheard • Fear of rejection • Helplessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feelings of confidence • Feelings of positivity about yourself and towards others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerful when there is a perceived 'win' even at the expense of others • Potential feelings of guilt or remorse after hurting others in

¹ <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/passive-aggressive-and-assertive-communication.pdf>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resentment towards those who 'use' them • Reduced self-respect 	<p>A healthy sense of self respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem rises 	<p>the pursuit of a 'win'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feels angry
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Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep quiet • Don't say what you think or feel for reasons such as fear of embarrassment, conflict or being judged • Put yourself down frequently • Agree with what others say even if you disagree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express your feelings, wants and needs directly and honestly • Don't assume you are correct and that everyone thinks the same way • Allows others to share their views without dismissing or insulting them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express your views and wants as if everyone else's are unreasonable or stupid • Ignore, insult or dismiss the views of others • Act in a bullying manner to gain power over others
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Assertiveness is a communication style. It is being able to express your feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and opinions in an open manner that doesn't violate the rights of others."

-Centre for Clinical Interventions

Assertive approaches

Stuck Record Technique

Also known as the broken record technique, it is a verbal response that is firm and conveys a clear message. It can work well in situations where the other person wants to argue, refuses to listen or is disorganised. It employs the skill of calm persistence. The technique involves repeating what you want over and over again, without raising the tone of your voice, becoming irritated or drawn into the issue. Continual repetition ensures the discussion doesn't get side tracked into an argument. The key is to stay calm, be clear about what you want and stick to the point.⁵

Fogging

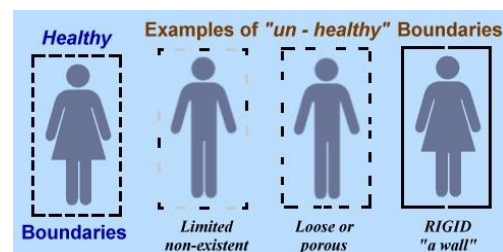
Fogging is a useful technique to deal with someone who may be behaving in an aggressive or manipulative manner. It can prevent the conversation from escalating through agreement rather than disagreement. Rather than arguing back, fogging gives a minimal response using calm language that is neither defensive nor passive to demands being made. It involves agreeing with any truths that are said, even if they are critical. By not responding in the expected way (defensive or argumentative) the other person will cease confrontation, as the desired effect isn't being achieved. It is called fogging because you act like a 'wall of fog' into which arguments are thrown but not returned (Extracts from www.skillsyouneed.com)

Authenticity

Being Authentic means to be true to yourself, your feelings and your beliefs. However, there are times where you wouldn't reveal all that you are thinking and feeling. Being authentic involves giving an honest genuine response

when it's appropriate and not going against your beliefs when it's not. For example, if a friend is distressed and complaining about some criticism that they have received, which you know is true, giving an honest response may not be appropriate in that moment. It may be more appropriate to comfort them in that moment and talk supportively about authentic thoughts later. On the whole, authentic behaviour is consistent with how you truly feel and this reflects healthy self-esteem.

Truthful and thoughtful communication isn't always the easiest option; it often takes courage to be vulnerable, which in turn takes practice. The ability to express emotions freely, clearly and with clear intentions helps to uphold healthy personal boundaries. This is essential for developing healthy self-esteem.



Healthy Boundaries

Understanding what our limits are in relationships and setting boundaries is a skill that isn't often taught in any formal setting. Using the self-awareness techniques from session 1, anyone can learn what is right for them and where their limits lie. Everyone can relate to the experience of having their personal boundaries crossed. If this happens often, it can lead to negative thoughts and feelings about ourselves and others, lowering self-esteem.

