



Wellbeing
& Recovery
College

Midlands Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust



A Keele University Teaching Trust

Building Self-Esteem and Assertiveness

Session 3 Assertiveness

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. Use the following exercise to explore the differences.

Communication styles¹

	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 	<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

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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helplessness • Resentment towards those who 'use' them • Reduced self-respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A healthy sense of self respect • Self-esteem rises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of guilt or remorse after hurting others in the pursuit of a 'win' • 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