

## Assertive Communication

Tell me one example of a time you miscommunicated with someone and what was the result.

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## Communication

- Much of what we do with other people – our family, friends, coworkers – involves how we talk with them.
- Some of the ways we express ourselves are helpful and other ways don't seem to work as well.
- Let's talk about what we know about the different kinds of communication styles
  - Some people just seem to blow up easily
  - Others just go along with whatever is being said
  - Some people talk too much or always interrupt
  - Etc.
- People usually communicate in a certain way, but sometimes their communication styles change in different situations (talking to a friend, a boss, the police, their children).

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## Passive Style

- What do you think this style is?

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## Passive Style

- People who tend to communicate this way have a hard time saying what they feel or need. Sometimes they bottle up their feelings and/or later feel angry, sad, or resentful that they "went along" with something they really did not want to do. These passive reactions are most likely to occur when there is a conflict between what somebody else wants and what they want or feel. These kinds of people often ignore their own needs and feelings.

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## Aggressive Style

- What do you think this style is?

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## Aggressive Style

- Some people react quickly and angrily in most situations. Their style comes across as attacking and "in your face," and it disregards the rights and feelings of others. Sometimes this approach seems to work in the short run, but over time it can hurt other people, making them feel resentful and/or angry.

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Passive-Aggressive Style

- What do you think this style is?

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Passive-Aggressive Style

- This style is characteristic of people who find it hard to openly and clearly say what they want or need. There is a disconnect between what they say and what they do. They may act out their aggressive feelings in an indirect or subtle way such as agreeing to do something but showing up late or forgetting about it, refusing to talk, and so forth. This style often leaves both the person and whoever they are talking to confused and frustrated.

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Assertive Style

- What do you think this style is?

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## Assertive Style

- People who have learned to use this way of talking with others often are able to think about what they need and feel while also considering the needs and feelings of others. They tend to listen quietly to the person speaking to them and then speak clearly and directly about their opinion, needs, or feelings. Sometimes, too, these kinds of people find a compromise that works for both sides. Assertive people respect their own feelings and needs and those of others as well. This style is usually respected by others.

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## What style is it?

- In the middle of a busy day, Lucinda's coworker asks if she would help her learn how to work the new copying machine. Lucinda flares up and loudly says, "I don't, have time for this – it's your job anyway – you are always asking for help!"

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## What style is it?

- Aggressive Style – these types of people often seem mainly concerned about their rights and needs and ignore what others need or feel.

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### What style is it?

- Tony has a friend to whom he has lent money many times, and the friend almost never pays him back. When his friend asks again for a quick loan, Tony avoids eye contact and tries to say no, but then he goes along with the request even though it may mean that he will not have enough money left for his rent.

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### What style is it?

- Passive: This kind of person usually puts the rights and feelings of others first and neglects his or her own rights and feelings.

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### What style is it?

- Louis has returned to school to complete his GED. He is feeling frustrated because his classmate, Tim, has asked him once again for help in completing his math assignment. Part of Louis's irritation is because Tim doesn't seem interested in working hard, but rather knows that Louis will give him all the answers as usual. Louis is working two jobs right now in addition to attending school, and he knows that Tim has a lot of spare time that he could be using to study. Although Louis feels angry and resentful, he reluctantly agrees to work with Tim for an hour at 2:00 that afternoon. However, Louis shows up 50 minutes late and mumbles that he somehow lost track of the time.

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### What style is it?

- Passive-aggressive: This kind of person sends confusing messages that leave him and the person he is talking to dissatisfied and resentful.

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### What style is it?

- Michael's friend Jamie wants to eat at the same café every time they meet. The café is fairly expensive, and the food is not especially good. Jamie calls one afternoon and says, "Let's meet at the same place we usually do. It's easy and quick." Michael says, "I know it's your favorite place. Maybe we can eat there next week, but today I'd really enjoy trying a different place. How about we eat at the new diner down the street?"

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### What style is it?

- Assertive: This response is respectful and acknowledges the other's viewpoint; it is brief and presents a compromise of sorts; it expresses the speaker's feelings and clearly states his request.

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## Tips for Talking Assertively

- Use "I" statements when possible
- Focus on your perspective, understanding, and needs, but acknowledge the other person's viewpoint as well.
- Example: I know you need some help, but I have to leave now in order to get to work on time.

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## Tips for Talking Assertively

- Avoid "absolutes" like "you always need something ... you never listen ..." because they are rarely true, and they are likely to make the other person defensive or angry.

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## Tips for Talking Assertively

- Look at the other person while you are listening and speaking to him or her. Watch your body language: avoiding eye contact, slumping, or shifting from foot to foot can signal that you are unsure of yourself and of what you want or need.

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## Tips for Talking Assertively

- Label your feelings in a calm way. Do not exaggerate or dramatize them. Say what you want or need in a brief, clear statement. Avoid excuses or vague answers. Generally, it is best to focus on one current issue, instead of going over old resentments or trying to tackle several issues at once.

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## Tips for Talking Assertively

- Make a statement that indicates you understand the other person's perspective (which does not mean you think the perspective is right – just that you are listening and get what they are feeling or saying).

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## Tips for Talking Assertively

- At times, suggest a compromise or a different solution such as "I can't loan you my car today, but I could give you a ride."

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### Tips for Talking Assertively

- When appropriate, take responsibility for your part in the problem.

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### Tips for Talking Assertively

- Congratulate yourself (silently!) afterward for being clear, consistent, and true to yourself.

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### 3 Steps

- 1. Describe the behavior (of the other person) in simple, direct words
- 2. Describe your feelings or thoughts about the behavior
- 3. Describe what you want to happen.

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### What would you say to Jack the next day?

- Phil came home late one night to find that his roommate, Jack, had left their apartment in a mess again. The sink was full of dirty dishes, ashtrays were overflowing, clothes were scattered all around the living room, and papers and trash were heaped on the table and chairs. Phil was furious, but because Jack had left for the night he could not immediately set him straight.

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### Hallmarks of Effective Communication

- Use "I" statements
- Use descriptive statements
- Be kind
- Show empathy
- Use tact
- Be specific
- Ask for a change
- Request
- Uses active listening
- Encourage

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### Rhetorical Questions: Is it really a question?

- Some questions are really not questions – they are put downs disguised as questions! These are called rhetorical questions, as they are actually aggressive statements!

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### Rhetorical Questions: Is it really a question?

- "Can't you do anything right?"
- Translation – you can't do anything right.

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### Rhetorical Questions: Is it really a question?

- "What were you thinking?"
- Translation – you weren't thinking and did something stupid.

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### Rhetorical Questions: Is it really a question?

- "What's wrong with you?"
- Translation – There is something wrong with you!

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### Rhetorical Questions: Is it really a question?

- "Are you kidding me?"
- Translation – you're not telling the truth!

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### Rhetorical Questions: Is it really a question?

- "Why can't you listen?"
- Translation – you're not listening!

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### Rhetorical Questions: Is it really a question?

- "Didn't I already tell you that?"
- Translation – You should know that already.

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### Rhetorical Questions: Is it really a question?

- "What – are you crazy?"
- Translation – You're acting nuts.

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### Rhetorical Questions: Is it really a question?

- "How many times do I need to tell you to put that away?"
- Translation – Stop ignoring me and do what I want!

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### Rhetorical Questions: Is it really a question?

- "Are you for real?"
- Translation – you are a piece of work!

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### Your turn – can you think of other rhetorical questions?

- 1.
- Translation:
- 2.
- Translation:
- 3.
- Translation:

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### What's your assertiveness IQ?

- Communication is important in all areas of our lives, and determines the quality of our relationships. This quiz identifies 7 keys to assertiveness.
- Directions: on a scale of 1 to 7, rate your level of agreement with each item:
- 7 – strongly agree
- 6 – agree
- 5 – slightly agree
- 4 – neither agree or disagree
- 3 – slightly disagree
- 2 – disagree
- 1 – strongly disagree

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### What's your assertiveness IQ?

- 7 – strongly agree
  - 6 – agree
  - 5 – slightly agree
  - 4 – neither agree or disagree
  - 3 – slightly disagree
  - 2 – disagree
  - 1 – strongly disagree
1. I am able to think flexibly and look at things from other points of view
  2. I do not try to change other people's perceptions
  3. I express my thoughts and feelings honestly with fact, using "I" statements and not "You" statements
  4. In times of conflict and disagreement, I make sure I "listen" by validating, empathizing and summarizing instead of defending myself.
  5. I think rationally and can differentiate between facts and interpretations.
  6. I am more concerned with being kind rather than proving that I am right.
  7. I tend to think positively and optimistically.

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### Total your score:

- 44-49 – GENIUS: Assertiveness IQ is extraordinary!
- 38-43 – MASTER: High level of Assertiveness
- 32-37 – PRO: Moderate level of Assertiveness
- 26-31 – INTERMEDIATE: Assertiveness needs some boosting!
- 20-25 – AMATEUR: Assertiveness IQ is low
- 14-19 – DABBLER: Assertiveness IQ is dangerously low
- Below 14 – DANGER ZONE! Assertiveness skills in need of help!

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### Discussion

- Do you agree with your score? Why or why not?

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### Are you a nay-sayer?

Healthy interpersonal relationships are a cornerstone of mental health and life satisfaction. The quality of our ability to develop healthy relationships is correlated with our general life happiness and life adjustment. Those who are kind and positive to others will have healthier relationships, and negativity interferes with developing close relationships. This exercise emphasizes and demonstrates well how the negativity of "nay-sayers" pushes others away. On the flip side, it also shows the power of treating others with positivity.

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## Role play!

- I need 2 volunteers! This exercise consists of a few minutes of role play in which two friends are deciding on where to go for their planned weekend away.
- One person will be the person suggesting a weekend plan and the other is a Nay-Sayer.
- For example if one person wants to go to the beach, the other person finds all sorts of reasons why not, such as, "I hate the sand in my toes" and "It's too far to drive."
- After a few moments of being the Nay-Sayer, the Nay-Sayer will change their tune and become more like cheerleaders. For every suggestion made by their partner, they delightfully and positively add to it, showing enthusiasm and encouragement for their partner's various ideas. For example, "It will be great spending time with you! Can't wait!"

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## Role Play Discussion

- How did it feel to be the Nay-Sayer?
- How did it feel being on the other end of the person's negativity?

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## Role Play Discussion

- Even though negativity is exaggerated in this activity, it does bring home the point of how important it is not to be a "wet blanket."
- What can we learn from this exercise about how we come across to others?
- This exercise can help us develop more of an awareness of how we come across in everyday life, and what changes we can make in our lives to stay positive with others instead of promoting negativity.

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Are you really listening or are you just hearing?

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