

“WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO AGREE AND DISAGREE CIVILLY”

WHAT KIND OF COMMUNICATOR ARE YOU?

Every time we speak, we choose and use one of four basic communication styles: assertive, aggressive, passive and passive-aggressive. Understanding the four basic types of communication will help you learn how to react more effectively when confronted with a difficult person.

The four basic types of communication are:

Assertive Communication: The most effective and healthiest form of communication is the assertive style. It’s how we naturally express ourselves when our self-esteem is intact, giving us the confidence to communicate without games or manipulation.



When we are being assertive, we work hard to create mutually satisfying solutions. We communicate our needs clearly and effectively. We care about relationships and strive for a win/win situation when working with others. We know our limits and refuse to be pushed beyond them just because someone else wants or needs something from us. Surprisingly, assertive is the style people use least.

Example: Marcie from Peanuts Comics

With whom or in what situations have you assumed the role as an assertive communicator?

Helpful References:

Peanuts Comic Strips, Charles M. Schultz

Introduction to Intercultural Communication Course, Loyalist College, Dennis Margueratt

Aggressive Communication:

Aggressive communication always involves manipulation. We may attempt to make people do what we want by inducing guilt or intimidation and control tactics. Whether our tactics are covert or overt, when we aggressively communicate, we want our needs met immediately.

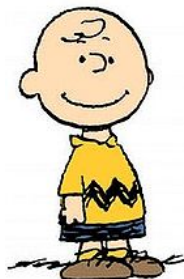


Although there are a few areas where aggressive behaviour is commonly used—such as during sports or during war—it often never works when establishing or developing positive relationships with people.

Example: Lucy van Pelt from Peanuts Comics

With whom or in what situations have you assumed the role as an aggressive communicator?

Passive Communication: Passive communication is based on compliance and hopes to avoid confrontation at all costs. In this mode, we don’t talk much, we question things even less, and act very little. When we communicate passively, we don’t want to rock the boat and may do it because we feel it is safer to simply not react to a situation in hopes that it will disappear or that we may go unnoticed.



Example: Charlie Brown from Peanuts Comics

With whom or in what situations have you assumed the role as a passive communicator?

Passive-Aggressive Communication:

This form of communication involves a combination of styles. A passive-aggressive person avoids direct confrontation (a passive action), but attempts to get even through manipulation (aggressive). If you’ve ever considered making that certain someone who needs to be “taught a thing or two” suffer—even just a little—this could be considered passive-aggressive behaviour. This is the kind of attitude that leads to gossiping in classrooms or politics in workplaces.



Example: Sally Brown from Peanuts Comics

With whom or in what situations have you assumed the role as a passive-aggressive communicator?

So now what?

Certainly we can identify people in our own life who may favour each of the four styles. Most of us use a combination of these four styles, depending on the situation or person. The styles we choose generally depend on what our past experiences have taught us will work best to get our needs met in each situation.



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