

Assertive, Passive, and Aggressive Behavior

Assertive Behavior includes standing up for your rights without infringing on the rights of others. Assertive behavior results in an “I win; you win” encounter. Assertion involves expressing beliefs, feelings, and preferences in a way that is direct, honest, and appropriate and shows a high degree of respect for yourself and the other.

Example: “When you talk, I can’t hear the movie. Please keep it down.”

Passive/Nonassertive Behavior is when someone gives up their own rights and (directly or indirectly) defers to the rights of another person. Passive behavior results in an “I lose; you win” outcome. Passive behavior includes violating your own rights through inaction or by failing to express your thoughts, feelings, or desires.

Example: “We can do whatever you want. Your ideas are probably better than mine.”

Aggressive Behavior is when someone stands up for their own rights without regard for others. Aggressive behavior results in an “I win; you lose” outcome. Aggression is self-expression that demands, attacks, or humiliates other people, generally in a way which shows lack of respect for others.

Example: “Hey, I’m in a hurry. Get out of my way.”

Passive-Aggressive Behavior occurs when someone acts out aggressive impulses in an indirect way. When people act passive-aggressively, they attempt to get what they need or want indirectly or manipulatively. Passive-aggressive behavior is an indirect attempt to control or punish others.

Example: “I’m sorry I’m so late. I didn’t realize this was such a big deal.” “Oh, don’t bother, I’ll have to do it myself.”

Assertive Behavior is:

- Self-expressive
- Honest
- Respectful of the rights of others
- Direct and firm
- Socially responsible
- Learned, rather than inborn
- Equalizing – benefiting self and other
- Verbal – including feelings, thoughts, desires, rights, facts, opinions
- Non-verbal – eye contact, voice posture, facial, gestures, timing
- Appropriate for the person, culture and situation