

Communication Styles

UNDERSTAND · REFLECT · CHOOSE A HEALTHIER WAY FORWARD

WHY IT MATTERS

The way we communicate shapes our relationships, influences how we feel, and affects the outcomes we get. Greater awareness of your communication style can help you respond more intentionally, reduce conflict and build stronger connections.

HEALTHY COMMUNICATION IS...

- ✓ Clear and respectful
- ✓ Honest without being hurtful
- ✓ Open to listening
- ✓ Focused on what matters

STYLE	KEY FEATURES	COMMON EXAMPLES	A HEALTHIER ALTERNATIVE
1 Passive Keeps your own needs quiet to maintain peace or avoid conflict.	– Finds it hard to express opinions or feelings – Often puts others' needs first – May agree even when uncomfortable – Can lead to resentment over time	<i>"It's okay, don't worry about me."</i> <i>"I don't mind."</i> <i>"Whatever you think is best."</i>	BE MORE ASSERTIVE – Express your needs clearly and respectfully – Use "I" statements – Be honest, even when it feels uncomfortable
2 Aggressive Focuses on your own needs at the expense of others.	– Can be forceful, critical or blaming – May disregard others' feelings – Often leads to defensiveness or conflict – May feel satisfying short-term but creates distance	<i>"You never listen!"</i> <i>"This is your fault."</i> <i>"Do what I say."</i>	BE MORE ASSERTIVE – Express your needs without blame or criticism – Use a calm and respectful tone – Aim for solutions, not winning
3 Passive-Aggressive Expresses negative feelings indirectly rather than openly.	– May appear cooperative on the surface – Often uses sarcasm, silence or subtle digs – Can create confusion and mistrust – May lead to unresolved issues	<i>"It's fine."</i> (cold tone) <i>"Whatever you want."</i> (then a negative comment later) <i>"I'll do it... eventually."</i> (procrastinating)	BE MORE DIRECT AND OPEN – Speak honestly and calmly about what's bothering you – Address issues early – Choose open conversation over hints
4 Assertive Expresses your needs clearly and respectfully, while considering others.	– Communicates openly and honestly – Respects both your needs and the needs of others – Listens actively – More likely to lead to understanding and stronger relationships	<i>"I feel... when..."</i> <i>"I would like..."</i> <i>"Can we find a solution together?"</i>	KEEP USING THIS APPROACH – Be clear, kind and specific – Listen as well as speak – Aim for mutual understanding

REFLECTION

- 1 Which communication style do you most often use?
- 2 In what situations is it harder for you to communicate assertively?
- 3 What might be the cost of staying in an unhelpful communication pattern?
- 4 What is one small change you can try this week?

SOURCES

Alberti, R.E. & Emmons, M.L. (1970/2017). *Your Perfect Right: Assertiveness and Equality in Your Life and Relationships*.
 Wolpe, J. (1958). *Psychotherapy by Reciprocal Inhibition*.

NOTE

Evidence-informed educational resource.