

Assertive Communication

Being able to balance the need to assert yourself without getting in your own way can be tricky in the heat of the moment. Communication that is calm and clear means letting go of aggressive or defensive feelings. When attempting to find the balance between being too passive or aggressive, it helps to remember the benefits and risks involved. Learning to communicate assertively won't guarantee that your needs will be met, but it improves your odds while helping maintain positive relationships with others.

Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Thinking your needs don't matter	Recognizing that your needs matter as much as others	Thinking that only your needs matter.
You give in / give up	You both compromise	You take / win
Not talking and not being heard	Talking and listening	Talking over people
Keeping the peace	Making certain things are fair for everyone involved	Looking out for just yourself
Being bullied and intimidated	Standing up for yourself	Bullying and intimidating others
Not speaking your mind	Expressing your point clearly and with confidence	Aggressive behavior, possibly leading to shouting or violence
Damages relationships	Enhances relationships	Damages relationships
Other people take you for granted and respect you less	Other people know your boundaries and where you stand	Other people don't like aggression and may distance themselves or respond in kind
Damages only your self-esteem	Builds your self-esteem	Damages other people's self-esteem

Examples of Assertive Communication

"I would like a refund."

- Uses "I" statements
- Is clear and direct

"Yelling bothers me; would you mind speaking more softly?"

- Describes how another person's behavior makes you feel without accusing or blaming
- Allows other people to be aware of the consequences of their actions
- No one can deny you your feelings

"I've heard what you have said but I still want a refund"

- Repetition is the key towards achieving what you need
- You are describing the action you specifically want, not stating what you feel is fair

- Dave Lechnyr, LCSW