1. **Aggressive:**
   No holding back and verbally or physically pushing others to get what you want.

2. **Passive:**
   You avoid confrontation as much as possible, sometimes sacrificing your needs or desires.

3. **Passive Aggressive:**
   Getting what you want in a roundabout way. Or at the very minimum, communicating your feelings indirectly through side-comments or non-verbals (i.e., rolling eyes). This includes **sarcasm**.

4. **Assertive:**
   Assertive communication involves asking for what you want or telling people how you feel in a direct but respectful manner.

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**Three Steps To Assertive Communication**

1. **Describe** the situation as clearly and specifically as you can.
2. **Express** how you feel about the situation
3. **Specify** a solution, what you want, and a deadline.

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**Why It's Important:**
Learning to be assertive can help reduce passive and aggressive behaviors, and lead to improved — and more positive — relationships. Also, you’ll likely notice an improvement in your own self-esteem and confidence.
**Tips and Tricks**

Below are some general skills related to assertive communication:

- When describing the situation, use **factual and correct** examples of behaviors that have happened (e.g. “You arrived ten minutes late.”). **Do not** use your opinions about someone’s personality or character (i.e. “You’re incredibly lazy.”)
- Use **“I-messages”**. For example: “**You** always come late!!” versus “I feel like I can’t depend on you.”
- **Tone** is everything. Make sure to use a firm but pleasant tone.
- **Stay calm**. If you notice you’re getting emotionally charged, end the conversation and return to it later.
- Use **active listening skills** to get a better sense of where the other person is coming from. Avoid making snap judgments and **ask** them about their opinions or concerns with the matter at hand.
- **Avoid backing down** or changing your mind during the conversation — leading to passivity — unless there is a good reason. And explain **why** you’re changing your mind.

**Additional Resources**

Here are additional descriptions and skills of items mentioned above:

- Learn about the “**Fogging**” or “**Stuck Record**” technique of assertive communication. (skillsyouneed.com)
- A thorough explanation of Assertiveness and additional skills such as dealing with criticism and saying “**No!**” (mindtools.com)
- A step-by-step explanation of “**I-messages**”

*Please use the pdf version on our website to directly link to these resources*

**Contact Us:**

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**Remember:**

The Office of the Student Ombuds is always available to help you practice these skills and help you think through how you want to approach a difficult conversation. We offer opportunities for **mock discussions**.

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