

Introduction: Let's take a minute and think about all the ways we communicated today. Did you speak to someone over the phone, using ASL, texting/email, or verbally in person? Were you taking a walk and crossed paths with someone who opened the door for you, told you about a needed detour, or just gave you a "mean mug"? Did you pat your dog's head before leaving the house? As your kid was going outside, did you hand them a rain jacket without saying anything?

Communication can be loosely defined as the means by which messages are delivered or exchanged. While thinking of this definition, most of us are guilty of only thinking about verbal communication, even though there are other additional ways to express yourself.

Author's note: Any text in red is a personal opinion/thought/experience, you could use it as an example or insert your own.

Ways to Communicate:

Verbal Communication - using words, tone, language (appropriate or not), and volume to express the way you are feeling/thinking, or deliver the message you want to be received

Non-verbal Communication- using actions instead of words such as a hug, pat on the back, a wave, thumbs up; body language such as using or having a lack of eye contact, arms crossed over chest, expression on our face, tapping our foot (anxiously), fidgeting, facial color (**when I get mad my face and neck turn very RED**), rolled up in the fetal position on the floor

Written Communication- handwritten notes/letters which offers some people comfort with the thoughts of writing their feelings and thoughts down which could either be saved or thrown away forever; digital messages such as social media, emails, blogging, etc which some often forget cannot be erased/thrown away

Listening- (often forgotten to be listed) the act of listening to whomever is communicating a message, should utilize the whole person in doing this- sit comfortably, appropriate eye contact, being present (thinking and processing what exactly the person is saying, not thinking about your response or own personal thoughts yet)

Visual Communication- using pictures and symbols to promote your message, examples could be company logos for advertisement, emojis, sign language, picture of me at DQ because I want ice cream or I'm already there!

Cautions and Strengths

Communication is the way of all living things. It is how we get our necessities met, make relationships, break relationships, promote our thoughts, express our feelings, learn, and so much more. A tree uses visual communication by turning brown and withering when it needs water. People and animals have similar ways to show if we are happy, afraid, or tired which involve visual, verbal, and nonverbal communication.

The **strength** within using these ways to communicate will be unlimited; think of the ways to communicate as if they were tools in your belt. If you were a home constructor, you would need your tools to be within your tool belt as you walk your foundation and are taking steps to continue the development. What if you see a piece of siding hanging down, are missing materials

that were documented as delivered, or changes were made to the blueprints? What if you cannot read blueprints and your friend typically helped you with that part and they were not at work today?

These are just examples that I hope are helping you think about the ways you communicate daily. Are you getting your needs met? Are you a talker or do you prefer to write letters/notes instead of verbally expressing yourself? *I, typically, am a talker but when communicating with my daughter about homework, I write her notes notifying her of the primary message which leaves the door open for her to bring up that (sometimes) overwhelming conversation when she is ready. When texting with friends, I enjoy using GIFs if I can in replace of word responses.*

While the strengths of identifying different types of communication are easy to list, the cautions are also. We must be cautious while communicating because we are actually passing along a message, so to speak. If our active listening skills are rusty and squeaking with every conversation, we could be contributing a number of things leading to a negative outcome. If we are still moving while listening, this could promote distraction of us both. If you are thinking about what you are going to say next, how are you hearing what I am saying? If you are not looking at me/my general direction when I am communicating with you, you could be missing the non-verbal message coming from my body language, facial expression, and eyes. If you are missing parts or half of the message being sent to you, then what? (Ask participants to brainstorm and answer)

Missing parts or half of the message could equal a misunderstanding leading hurt feelings or confusion, trigger you to behave a certain way due to what you *think* the person communicating said/meant, or trigger you to think a certain way which might not be completely accurate. When some people say “Communication is the key to every relationship.”, I think they are onto something. Let's take a look at some scenarios and think about the different outcomes that could occur if **miscommunication** took place.

1. You are working at Dollar General Distribution Center collecting items for an order. Your friend starts asking you a question while the automated voice coming from your earpiece tells you the next item to collect; you hear a little of both. *You grab the wrong item causing a chain reaction. You could answer your friend wrong, misleading her. You could just not put that item in there, pretending no big deal but then that chain reaction could get you in trouble on a few different levels (of management- immediate supervisor, his supervisor, the store receiving the order calls to complain leading the supervisor to your area of the plant).*
2. Grandma Agnes is coming to spend the weekend; mother sends you to town with a “honey do” list. You have to go to Walmart, CVS, and the flower shop but forgot which one Mother said you had to visit first because the outcome of the first stop affects the rest of the stops being made. *You go over the money amount given to you because you forgot to go to Walmart first and price check while shopping before continuing onto the next stop. You overpay for an item. You must go to one place twice. You forgot earplugs leading to you to stay awake all night from Grandma Agnes' snoring leading you to then be tired and cranky the next day; this could continue, contributing to miscommunication*

putting a strain on your relationships, heart, and brain. (Funny how when I am in trouble due to miscommunication, I can hear my mom say "Well, if you would have just listened...")

3. The doctor gives a mother-to-be the three different options of pain management during birth, but she is distracted by the thought of pain and doesn't receive the information about her options/choices. *This could cause her to search for information from other places increasing the chances of first, obtaining misinformation/ half-truths, and second, making her decision based on opinions instead of facts. This misinformation could be stored and then shared when the time calls for it, leading to the spread of opinions. Is that how stereotypes and stigmas are born?*

Author's note to facilitator, if this lesson is to be split/used for two meetings, this would be a good place to end and pick back up next time.

Types of Communication:

Passive Communication- happens when we continuously put others' needs and wants before our own

Aggressive Communication- happens when one person is *passionately* expressing the importance of their needs/wants only and having no consideration for anyone else involved or is only able to see their own perspective

Assertive Communication- happens when both parties involved are concerned about the needs/wants of both parties and are willing to compromise

Cautions and Strengths

Strengths that come with effectively using assertive communication will help you be more in control of situations you find yourself in. If you are an assertive communicator, you should find yourself more capable of thinking levelheaded about situations or opportunities that arise. If those situations determine problem solving is a needed solution, an assertive communicator is able to think about all parties involved and make a considerate decision. Acting as a more considerate person should help ensure you and others are experiencing a balance of *give and take* within your relationship.

Cautions of using assertive communication would include the fact that some people won't like it; this could cause some relationships to end or have a big conflict. After figuring out what kind of communicator we typically are, if we have not been using assertive communication, chances are people around us have grown used to our behavior. People don't like it when they grow used to taking advantage of a passive communicator and then can't anymore. There are many cautions that come with changing yourself for the better, but many of those involve things that the other person has to work on since you have already begun your work.

Let's take a minute and assess what type of communicator we are and most often encounter.

Communicator Assessment

Facilitator Copy

Which is most often your style? (Be honest/Circle one/Explain)

1= Passive 5=Assertive 10=Aggressive

1----2----3----4----5----6----7----8----9----10

Which type do most people seem to use? (Do you feel there is a *happy medium*? Do many seem to use one extreme or the other such as only passive or only aggressive communication?)

Which type of communication do you most often see on Facebook?

Why do you think that is?

Have you ever had your communication misinterpreted? Why do you think that happened?

How can we guard against that happening? *Awareness of the different ways to communicate, how to tell which type of communication is being used, and how we should react.*

What happens when we are afraid of being honest in our communication? *When we are afraid of being honest and allow our communication to suffer because of that, we are only encouraging the behavior/actions that scare us to continue. We are then promoting that we accept whatever behavior we are actually afraid of; we accept whatever opportunity presented itself even though we don't want it.*

Practice your ability to identify the types of communication by doing the **Practice Scenarios** involving the 3 different types, then refresh your mind with **Assertiveness Tips w/ examples** and complete the **Assertive Communication Practice**. After completion, you will be armed with plenty of examples of types of communication, ways to communication, and have practiced assertive communication within different real-life scenarios. We hope you have a better understanding of how important communication is within our daily lives and relationships. This should be another *tool* in your *belt* to help along your journey to *a better life*.

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Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Communication

Passive Communication

During passive communication, a person prioritizes the needs, wants, and feelings of others, even at their own expense. The person does not express their own needs, or does not stand up for them. This can lead to being taken advantage of, even by well-meaning people who are unaware of the passive communicator's needs and wants.

- Soft spoken / quiet
- Allows others to take advantage
- Prioritizes needs of others
- Poor eye contact / looks down or away
- Does not express one's own needs or wants
- Lack of confidence

Aggressive Communication

Through aggressive communication, a person expresses that only their own needs, wants, and feelings matter. The other person is bullied, and their needs are ignored.

- Easily frustrated
- Speaks in a loud or overbearing way
- Unwilling to compromise
- Use of criticism, humiliation, and domination
- Frequently interrupts or does not listen
- Disrespectful toward others

Assertive Communication

Assertive communication emphasizes the importance of *both* peoples' needs. During assertive communication, a person stands up for their own needs, wants, and feelings, but also listens to and respects the needs of others. Assertive communication is defined by confidence, and a willingness to compromise.

- Listens without interruption
- Clearly states needs and wants
- Willing to compromise
- Stands up for own rights
- Confident tone / body language
- Good eye contact

Examples

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Scenario | A friend asks to borrow your car. This will be a big inconvenience for you. |
| Passive | Umm, yeah, I guess that's fine. Do you need me to fill the tank? |
| Aggressive | No way! Why would I let you borrow my car? You're crazy to even ask. |
| Assertive | I need my car that day, but I'll have time to drop you off. |

Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Communication

Practice

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Scenario | Your boss asks you to stay late, while everyone else leaves. You're always the one who stays late, and tonight you have plans. |
| Passive | |
| Aggressive | |
| Assertive | |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Scenario | Your partner left a mess in the kitchen, and you're too busy to clean. |
| Passive | |
| Aggressive | |
| Assertive | |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Scenario | You're at a restaurant, and the server brought you the wrong dish. |
| Passive | |
| Aggressive | |
| Assertive | |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Scenario | A friend showed up at your house uninvited. Usually you would be happy to let them in, but this time you're busy. |
| Passive | |
| Aggressive | |
| Assertive | |

Assertive Communication



Assertive Communication: A communication style in which a person stands up for their own needs and wants, while also taking into consideration the needs and wants of others, without behaving passively or aggressively.

Traits of Assertive Communicators

- Clearly state needs and wants
- Eye contact
- Listens to others without interruption
- Appropriate speaking volume
- Steady tone of voice
- Confident body language

Assertiveness Tips

Respect yourself. Your needs, wants, and rights are as important as anyone else's. It's fine to express what you want, so long as you are respectful toward the rights of others.

Express your thoughts and feelings calmly. Giving the silent treatment, yelling, threatening, and shaming are all great examples of what not to do. Take responsibility for your emotions, and express them in a calm and factual manner. Try starting sentences with "I feel..."

Plan what you're going to say. Know your wants and needs, and how you can express them, before entering a conversation. Come up with specific sentences and words you can use.

Say "no" when you need to. You can't make everyone happy all the time. When you need to say "no", do so clearly, without lying about the reasons. Offer to help find another solution.

Examples of Assertive Communication

"I've been feeling frustrated about doing most of the chores around the house. I understand that you're busy, but I need help. How can we make this work?"

The speaker takes responsibility for their feelings without blaming, and clearly describes their needs.

"I won't be able to take you to the airport on Friday. I've had a long week, and I want to rest."

The speaker respects their own needs and wants by clearly saying "no".

"I'm having a hard time sleeping when your music is on. What if you use headphones, or I can help you move the speakers to another room."

The speaker describes their needs, while also considering the needs and wants of the other person.

Assertive Communication

Practice

Tip: Before responding, consider what your wants and needs might be in each situation.

Your Partner: “I know you have plans for the weekend, but I really need you to watch the kids. I have a friend coming to town, and we made plans.”

Assertive Response:

Situation: You’ve just received your food at a restaurant, and it was prepared incorrectly. Your sandwich seems to have extra mayo, instead of no mayo.

Assertive Statement:

Your Friend: “Hey, can I borrow some money? I want to buy these shoes, but I left my wallet at home. I’ll pay you back soon, I swear. It won’t be like last time.”

Assertive Response:

Situation: Your neighbor is adding an expansion to their house, and the crew starts working, very loudly, at 5 AM. It has woken you up every day for a week.

Assertive Statement: