



COMMUNICATION STYLES

Learn three common communication styles through skits

OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore possible communication styles (passive, assertive, aggressive)
- Students will consider which style is most effective

MATERIALS

Communication Style Skits

- Passive, Assertive, Aggressive

Communication Style Articles

- Communication Styles option 1
- Communication Styles option 2

TIME

45 min

LESSON INTRO

The three communication styles presented (Passive, Assertive, and Aggressive) are taught here in the context of addressing conflictual situations.

INTRODUCING COMMUNICATION STEP BY STEP

1. Hand out or display one of the articles on Communication Styles. Choose whichever one you wish!
2. Ask students to annotate the article as they read. Consider:
 - Circle information that is important
 - Underline information that they already know
 - Star information that they have a question, wonder, or alternative idea.
3. Allow time for students to read and digest the material.
4. Group up students into pods of four to share their information from the article.
5. Next, split the class into three small groups and assign each group one of the three communication styles: Passive, Assertive, Aggressive.

6. Hand out the skits for students to practice reading through and run through a rehearsal.
7. As the groups are ready, invite them up to perform. Students should not initially share which “style” they are presenting.
8. As students perform the skit, have the rest of the class figure out which style is being represented by how the conflict plays out.

VARIATIONS

1. Instead of using the pre-made skits. Instruct each group to write a short skit in a way that characterizes their assigned style. Use the sample synopsis’ below for a “scene” that the students can base their skit from.

All of the skits should be based on the same scenario so that students can see a comparison between different ways to handle a situation:

- **Tattoo Parlor:** Customer comes into a tattoo parlor and describes the tattoo he/she wants. The tattoo artist proceeds to give the customer a hideous tattoo that is nothing like the one described. Customer communicates his/her displeasure with a _____ style.
- **Car Mechanic:** Customer brings car into the mechanic to have a specific issue repaired. When the customer comes back to pick up the car, the mechanic has done entirely the wrong work. Customer communicates his/her displeasure with a _____ style.
- **Mom’s Night Out:** Mom is heading out for the evening, and asks the kids to complete three specific tasks while she’s out. The kids play and watch TV instead. When she comes home, she communicates her displeasure with a _____ style.

As students perform the skit, have the rest of the class figure out which style is being represented by how the conflict plays out.

REFLECTION & WRAP UP

1. Once all the groups have performed, have students circle up to discuss:
 - What was the most effective style of response in this scenario?
 - What specific behaviors (traits) made that style most effective?
 - Is there a ‘right way’ to address conflict?
 - When do you usually interact in any of these ways?
 - Why can it be difficult to be assertive?
 - Think of a specific time when you used a passive or aggressive style. What made that way seem like the best option?

NOTES

Educational Standards: CASEL: Self Awareness, CASEL: Self Management, CASEL: Social Awareness, CASEL: Relationship Skills, CASEL: Responsible Decision-Making, P21: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, P21: Communication and Collaboration, P21: Flexibility and Adaptability, P21: Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, CCRS:SL3 Evaluate Perspective and Evidence, CCRS:SL4 Present Information, CCRS:SL6 Adapt Speech

**Skit #1 - At a Car Mechanics**

Customer: Hi! I think my car is broken and I need it fixed.

Mechanic: Ok! I'll take a look at it and let you know what I find out tomorrow.

NEXT DAY

Customer: Hi! I'm back!

Mechanic: Well, I tried fixing the engine but while I was tinkering around...um...I popped the tires and scratched the hood of the car.

Customer: WHAT?!?! (Very angry) You..You..You'll regret this!!!

(Pushes something off the table)

Just you wait!!!

You're the absolute most ugly, terrible, #!%@* good for nothing person I ever saw!

Mechanic: (Angry) Hold on!! You have no right to call me that! And watch out for my property!!

Customer: YOUR property?!?!? What about MY property?!?!? I'll be back and you'll be sorry!

(Storms out)



Skit #2 - At a Car Mechanics

Customer: Hi! I think my car is broken and I need it fixed.

Mechanic: Ok! I'll take a look at it and let you know what I find out tomorrow.

NEXT DAY

Customer: Hi! I'm back!

Mechanic: Well, I tried fixing the engine but while I was tinkering around...um...I popped the tires and scratched the hood of the car.

Customer: Oh.... (Looks worried)

Mechanic: Yeah, sometimes that happens, you know.

Customer: (Quietly) I've never heard of that before.

Mechanic: Well, I can fix the tires for \$300.

Customer: Ok... (looks down, sighs). Well... I guess so. I need my car fixed.

**Skit #3 - At a Car Mechanics**

Customer: Hi! I think my car is broken and I need it fixed.

Mechanic: Ok! I'll take a look at it and let you know what I find out tomorrow.

NEXT DAY

Customer: Hi! I'm back!

Mechanic: Well, I tried fixing the engine but while I was tinkering around...um...I popped the tires and scratched the hood of the car.

Customer: (Calmly) Well, that is a problem. What are you going to do about it?

Mechanic: I don't know...keep working on it I guess.

Customer: I'd rather take my business to someone I can trust.

Mechanic: Well, I can fix the tires for \$300.

Customer: No, you've already caused me a bigger problem. I'd like you to pay for the damage that you caused.

Mechanic: Wait! It was an accident!

Customer: I understand you didn't mean to, but you still ruined my car. And now I feel like you are trying to cheat me into more business! I have the number of the Business Bureau who I will call as soon as we're done here, they will look into your business. Meanwhile, let's take a look at the car. I've got another mechanic I will bring in to assess the damage and charge the bill.

Communication Styles

Passive

Assertive

Aggressive



General

Compliant, submissive, talks little, vague non-committal communication, puts self down, praises others

"I don't mind...that's fine....yes alright"

Actions and expressions fit with words spoken, firm but polite and clear messages, respectful of self and others

"That's a good idea, and how about if we did this too..." or "I can see that, but I'd really like..."

Sarcastic, harsh, always right, superior, know it all, interrupts, talks over others, critical, put-downs, patronising, disrespectful of others

"This is what we're doing, if you don't like it, tough"

Beliefs

You're okay, I'm not

Has no opinion other than that the other person/s are always more important, so it doesn't matter what they think anyway

I'm okay, you're okay

Believes or acts as if all the individuals involved are equal, each deserving of respect, and no more entitled than the other to have things done their way

I'm okay, you're not

Believe they are entitled to have things done their way, the way they want it to be done, because they are right, and others (and their needs) are less important

Eyes

Avoids eye contact, looks down, teary, pleading

Warm, welcoming, friendly, comfortable eye contact

Narrow, emotion-less, staring, expressionless

Posture

Makes body smaller – stooped, leaning, hunched shoulders

Relaxed, open, welcoming

Makes body bigger – upright, head high, shoulders out, hands on hips, feet apart

Hands

Together, fidgety, clammy

Open, friendly and appropriate gestures

Pointing fingers, making fists, clenched, hands on hips

Consequences

Give in to others, don't get what we want or need, self-critical thoughts, miserable

Good relationships with others, happy with outcome and to compromise

Make enemies, upset others and self, feel angry and resentful



Definitions of Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Responses

Passive Behavior involves saying nothing in a response, keeping feelings to yourself, hiding feelings from others, and perhaps even hiding your feelings from yourself. Passive behavior is often dishonest and involves letting other people violate your personal right to be treated with respect and dignity.

Aggressive Behavior involves expressing your feelings indirectly through insults, sarcasm, labels, put-downs, and hostile statements and actions. Aggressive behavior involves expressing thoughts, feelings, and opinions in a way that violates others' rights to be treated with respect and dignity.

Assertive behavior involves describing your feelings, thoughts, opinions, and preferences directly to another person in an honest and appropriate way that respects both you and the other person. It enables you to act in your own best interests, to stand up for yourself without undue anxiety, to express honest feelings comfortably, and to exercise personal rights without denying the rights of others. Assertive behavior is direct, honest, self-enhancing self-expression that is not hurtful to others and is appropriate for the receiver and the situation.

Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
<i>Indifferent</i>	<i>Attacks person verbally or physically</i>	<i>Speaks clearly and confidently</i>
<i>Lifeless</i>	<i>Hostile</i>	<i>Honest</i>
<i>Doesn't care</i>	<i>Sarcastic</i>	<i>Deals directly with anger</i>
<i>Avoids the problem</i>	<i>Blaming</i>	<i>Appropriate</i>
<i>"I'm not good enough"</i>	<i>Selfish</i>	<i>Considers the rights of the other person</i>
<i>"It doesn't matter"</i>	<i>Opinionated</i>	<i>Deals with the problem</i>
<i>Builds anger</i>	<i>Acts out in anger</i>	<i>Active</i>
<i>Hopes that needs will be met</i>	<i>Demanding</i>	<i>Cares about self</i>
<i>Lacks confidence</i>	<i>Fighting</i>	<i>Cares about results</i>
<i>Non active</i>	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Cares about the situation</i>
<i>Non aggressive</i>	<i>Emotional</i>	