

THE AGGRESSIVE STYLE

The Aggressive Style - This style is about winning – often at someone else's expense. An aggressive person behaves as if their needs are the most important, as though they have more rights, and have more to contribute than other people. It is an ineffective communication style as the content of the message may get lost because people are too busy reacting to the way it's delivered.

Behavioral Characteristics

- Frightening, threatening, loud, hostile
- Willing to achieve goals at expense of others
- Out to "win"
- Demanding, abrasive
- Belligerent
- Explosive, unpredictable
- Intimidating
- Bullying

Non-Verbal Behavioral

- Voice – volume is loud
- Posture – 'bigger than' others
- Gestures - big, fast, sharp/jerky
- Facial expression – scowl, frown, glare
- Spatial position - Invade others' personal space, try to stand 'over' others

People on the Receiving end Feel

- Defensive, aggressive (withdraw or fight back)
- Uncooperative
- Resentful/Vengeful
- Humiliated/degraded
- Hurt
- Afraid
- A loss of respect for the aggressive person
- Mistakes and problems are not reported to an aggressive person in case they "blow up". Others are afraid of being railroaded, exploited or humiliated.

Language

- "You are crazy!"
- "Do it my way!"
- "You make me sick!"
- "That is just about enough out of you!"
- Sarcasm, name-calling, threatening, blaming, insulting.



THE PASSIVE –AGGRESSIVE STYLE

The Passive-Aggressive Style - This is a style in which people appear passive on the surface, but are actually acting out their anger in indirect or behind-the-scenes ways. Prisoners of War often act in passive-aggressive ways in order to deal with an overwhelming lack of power. People who behave in this manner usually feel powerless and resentful, and express their feelings by subtly undermining the object (real or imagined) of their resentments – even if this ends up sabotaging themselves. The expression "Cut off your nose to spite your face" is a perfect description of passive-aggressive behaviour.

Behavioral Characteristics

- Indirectly aggressive
- Sarcastic
- Devious
- Unreliable
- Complaining
- Sulky
- Patronizing
- Gossips
- Two-faced - Pleasant to people to their faces, but poisonous behind their backs (rumors, sabotage etc.) People do things to actively harm the other party e.g. they sabotage a machine by loosening a bolt or put too much salt in their food.

Language

- Passive-aggressive language is when you say something like "Why don't you go ahead and do it; my ideas aren't very good anyway" but maybe with a little sting of irony or even worse, sarcasm, such as "You always know better in any case."
- "Oh don't you worry about me, I can sort myself out – like I usually have to."

Non-Verbal Behavioral

- Voice – Often speaks with a sugary sweet voice.
- Posture – often asymmetrical – e.g. Standing with hand on hip, and hip thrust out (when being sarcastic or patronizing)
- Gestures – Can be jerky, quick
- Facial expression – Often looks sweet and innocent
- Spatial position – often too close, even touching other as pretends to be warm and friendly

People on the Receiving end Feel

- Confused
- Angry
- Hurt
- Resentful



THE SUBMISSIVE STYLE

The Submissive Style - This style is about pleasing other people and avoiding conflict. A submissive person behaves as if other peoples' needs are more important, and other people have more rights and more to contribute.

Behavioral Characteristics

- Apologetic (feel as if you are imposing when you ask for what you want)
- Avoiding any confrontation
- Finding difficulty in taking responsibility or decisions
- Yielding to someone else's preferences (and discounting own rights and needs)
- Opting out
- Feeling like a victim
- Blaming others for events
- Refusing compliments
- Inexpressive (of feelings and desires)



Language

- "Oh, it's nothing, really."
- "Oh, that's all right; I didn't want it anymore."
- "You choose; anything is fine."

Non-Verbal Behavioral

- Voice – Volume is soft
- Posture – make themselves as small as possible, head down
- Gestures – twist and fidget
- Facial expression – no eye contact
- Spatial position – make themselves smaller/lower than others
- Submissive behavior is marked by a martyr-like attitude (victim mentality) and a refusal to try out initiatives, which might improve things.

People on the Receiving end Feel

- Exasperated
- Frustrated
- Guilty
- You don't know what you want (and so discount you)
- They can take advantage of you.
- Others resent the low energy surrounding the submissive person and eventually give up trying to help them because their efforts are subtly or overtly rejected.

THE MANIPULATIVE STYLE

The Manipulative Style - This style is scheming, calculating and shrewd. Manipulative communicators are skilled at influencing or controlling others to their own advantage. Their spoken words hide an underlying message, of which the other person may be totally unaware.

Behavioral Characteristics

- Cunning
- Controlling of others in an insidious way – for example, by sulking
- Asking indirectly for needs to be met
- Making others feel obliged or sorry for them.
- Uses 'artificial' tears

Language

- "You are so lucky to have those chocolates, I wish I had some. I can't afford such expensive chocolates."
- "I didn't have time to buy anything, so I had to wear this dress. I just hope I don't look too awful in it." ('Fishing' for a compliment).

Non-Verbal Behavioral

- Voice – patronizing, envious, ingratiating, often high pitch
- Facial expression – Can put on the 'hang dog' expression

People on the Receiving end Feel

- Guilty
- Frustrated
- Angry, irritated or annoyed
- Resentful
- Others feel they never know where they stand with a manipulative person and are annoyed at constantly having to try to work out what is going on

Source: The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook. 2nd edition. Edmund J Bourne. New Harbinger Publications, Inc. 1995



ASSERTIVE STYLE

The Assertive Style - Assertive communication is born of high self-esteem. It is the healthiest and most effective style of communication - the sweet spot between being too aggressive and too passive. When we are assertive, we have the confidence to communicate without resorting to games or manipulation. We know our limits and don't allow ourselves to be pushed beyond them just because someone else wants or needs something from us. Surprisingly, however, Assertive is the style most people use least.



Behavioral Characteristics

- Achieving goals without hurting others
- Protective of own rights and respectful of others' rights
- Socially and emotionally expressive
- Making your own choices and taking responsibility for them
- Asking directly for needs to be met, while accepting the possibility of rejection
- Accepting compliments

Language

- "Please would you turn the volume down? I am really struggling to concentrate on my studies."
- "I am so sorry, but I won't be able to help you with your project this afternoon, as I have a dentist appointment."

Non-Verbal Behavior

- Voice – medium pitch and speed and volume
- Posture – open posture, symmetrical balance, tall, relaxed, no fidgeting
- Gestures – even, rounded, expansive
- Facial expression – good eye contact
- Spatial position – in control, respectful of others

People on the Receiving end Feel

- They can take the person at their word
- They know where they stand with the person
- The person can cope with justified criticism and accept compliments
- The person can look after themselves
- Respect for the person