

Social and Communication skills

The 3 communication styles

Learning to be assertive allows us to communicate our feelings, opinions, and needs in an honest and healthy way to both ourselves and others. Being assertive could be viewed as finding a 'middle ground' between being passive or being aggressive.



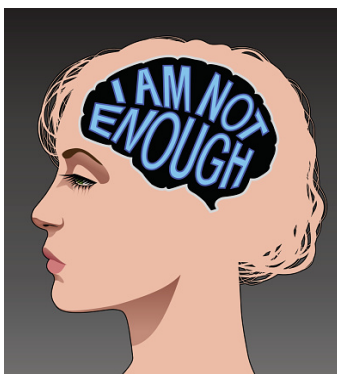
Aggressive

Aggressive communication is about getting your way. Aggressive people believe their needs are more important than others' and they use power, intimidation or threats to get what they want.

Being **aggressive** can show disrespect to the other person and it could seem that we are trying to dominate or bully them to control their response.

Signs include:

- Making demands rather than requests
- Not listening to other people's perspectives
- Using power to control people when in a position of authority
- Nonverbal cues: speaking loudly, using a demanding tone, trying to intimidate



Passive

Passive communication is about avoiding confrontation at all costs. Passive people deny their needs and prefer to defer to what others need or want.

Being **passive** means that someone or something else is ‘dominating’ our views and if we give too much weight to what they say, we can end up doing or saying things that we don’t really want to.

Signs include:

- Wanting to please others and want to avoid conflict
- Having a hard time saying “no” to a request even if it is something that you don’t want to do.



Assertive

Assertive communication is about treating yourself and others with respect. It is about believing your needs and other people’s needs are equally important.

Being **assertive** is a balanced way of responding that means we can get our feelings, opinions, and needs across by communicating what we would like to happen, but in a controlled way.

Signs include:

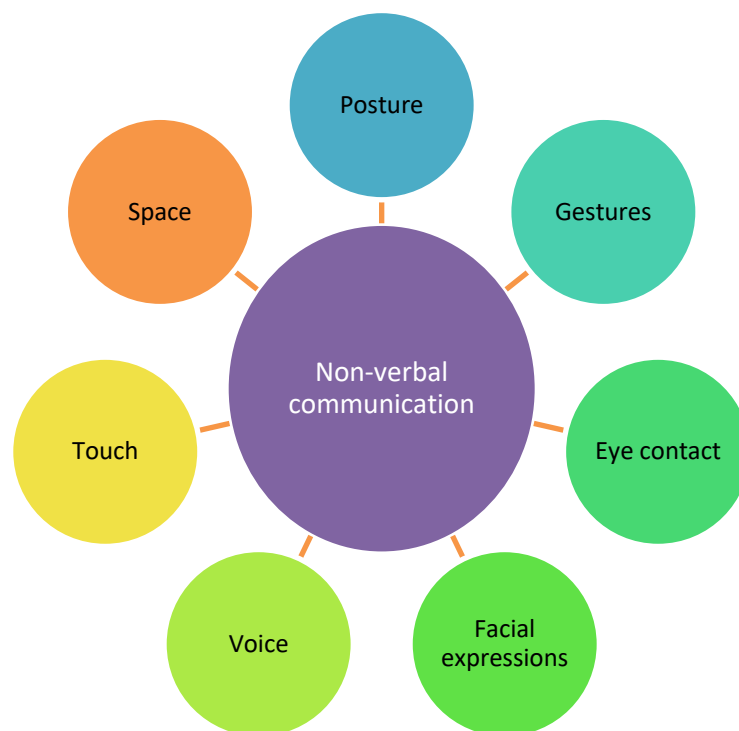
- Speaking clearly and directly in conflict situations
- Standing up for yourself without attacking others
- Standing firm on beliefs without trying to convince other people they are wrong
- Non-verbal cues: relaxed posture, casual body language, neutral or friendly facial expressions, a tone of voice that is confident but not pushy, making eye contact but not glaring.



Listening and validation skills

- + Pay attention – look at the person
- + Be encouraging
- + Do not interrupt
- + Use open ended questions “how are you feeling?”
- + Reflect back what they have said
- + Understand how they might be feeling and thinking
- + Treat others as equal

Non-verbal communication



1. Our body language

55% of the way we communicate with people is through our bodies.

When we validate, we should be mindful of (but not limited to) the following:

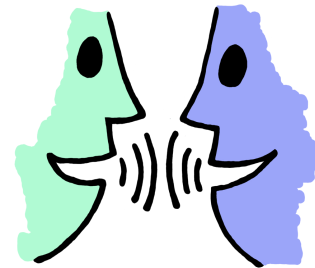
- Making eye contact
- Looking interested
- Nodding occasionally
- Responding with our face
 - For example, smile at happy statements, look concerned when hearing something painful
- Being aware of our posture
 - For example, not crossing your arms over your body



2. Our verbal communication

This can include:

- Tone of voice
 - Use a sympathetic tone
 - Refrain from sarcastic / mocking tones
- Be mindful of language you use
 - Use non-judgemental language



3. Reflect back

- Say back what you heard or observed to be sure you understand what the person is saying.
- Really try to “get” what the person thinks or feels.
- Have an open mind
 - No disagreeing, criticising or trying to change the person’s mind
- Example “*So you are mad at me because you think I lied just to get back at you. Did I get it right?*”



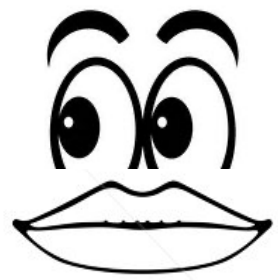
4. Paying attention to the other person

Be sensitive to what is not being said by the other person

- Pay attention to their body language, what is happening and what you already know about the person
- Be open to correction
 - Be kind to yourself, we don’t always “get” what is going on with the other person the first time around

5. Acknowledging and understanding

- Verbally communicate that you understand how their thoughts, feelings, behaviours have come about.
 - For example: “It make sense that you feel that way....because...”
- Remember you don’t have to agree with the person’s actions, thoughts or feelings.



6. Show equality

Be yourself! Treat the other person as an equal, not as fragile and incompetent.

For example:

- Be willing to admit mistakes
- Introduce yourself by your first name if the other person has introduced themselves by their first name



Finding and Getting People to Like You

LOOK FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE CLOSE BY YOU.

Familiarity often leads to liking and sometimes love.

To find people you might like and who might like you, it is important to make sure that you are frequently around and visible to a group of people. Many people find friends who are classmates or members of groups they join, or who work at or go to the same places.

LOOK FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE SIMILAR TO YOU.

We often make friends with people who share our interests and attitudes.

Though always agreeing with someone will not make you more attractive to them, a lot of people are attracted to those who share the same important interests and attitudes, such as politics, lifestyle, morals.

WORK ON YOUR CONVERSATION SKILLS.

Ask and respond to questions; respond with a little more info than requested.

Make small talk; don't underestimate the value of chit-chat.

Self-disclose skillfully; keep your self-disclosure close to that of the other person.

Don't interrupt; don't start talking just fractionally before or after someone else.

Learn things to talk about: Watch others; read; increase your activities and experiences.

EXPRESS LIKING (SELECTIVELY).

We often like the people we think like us.

Express genuine liking for the other person. But don't try to suck up to the other person or grovel. Find things to compliment that are not super-obvious. Don't praise too much too often, and never use compliments to obtain favours.

Mindfulness of Others

FRIENDSHIPS LAST LONGER WHEN WE ARE MINDFUL.

OBSERVE

- Pay attention with interest and curiosity to others around you.
- Stop multitasking; focus on the people you are with.
- Stay in the present rather than planning what to say next.
- Let go of a focus on self, and focus on others around you.
- Be open to new information about others.
- Notice judgmental thoughts about others, and let them go.
- Give up clinging to always being right.

DESCRIBE

- Replace judgmental words with descriptive words.
- Avoid assuming or interpreting what other people think about you without checking the facts. (Remember, no one has ever observed another person's thoughts, motives, intentions, feelings, emotions, desires, or experiences.)
- Avoid questioning other people's motives (unless you have very good reasons to do so).
- Give others the benefit of the doubt.

PARTICIPATE

- Throw yourself into interactions with others.
- Go with the flow, rather than trying to control the flow.
- Become one with group activities and conversations.

Finding and Getting People to Like You

Fill out this sheet whenever you practice finding friends and whenever you have an opportunity to practice, even if you don't (or almost don't) do anything to practice.

List two ways you could (or do) make casual but regular contact with people.

1.

2.

List two ways you could find (or have found) people whose attitudes are similar to yours.

1.

2.

List two ways you could get in conversations (or have been in them) where you could ask a question, give an answer, give a compliment, or express liking to others.

1.

2.

List times you have been near a group conversation you could practice joining (or how you could find one).

1.

2.

Describe one thing you have done to make a new friend and get someone to like you.

Check off and describe each skill that you used.

Proximity Similarity Conversation Skills Expressed Liking

Describe any efforts you made to join a conversational group.

Describe any efforts you made to use your conversation skills with others.

How effective was the interaction?

Mindfulness of Others

Fill out this sheet whenever you practice mindfulness of others and whenever you have an opportunity to practice even if you don't (or almost don't) do anything to practice.

Check off any of the following that you practiced:

- ☐ Paid attention with interest and curiosity to others around me.
- ☐ Let go of a focus on myself and focused on the people I was with.
- ☐ Noticed judgmental thoughts about others and let them go.
- ☐ Stayed in the present (instead of planning what I would say next) and listened.
- ☐ Put my entire attention on the other person and did not multitask.
- ☐ Gave up clinging to being right.
- ☐ Other:

- ☐ Described in a matter-of-fact way what I observed.
- ☐ Replaced judgmental descriptions with descriptive words.
- ☐ Described what I observed, instead of making assumptions and interpretations of others.
- ☐ Avoided questioning others' motives.
- ☐ Other:

- ☐ Threw myself into interactions with others.
- ☐ Went with the flow, rather than trying to control everything.
- ☐ Became one with the conversation I was in.
- ☐ Other:

Describe a situation where you practiced mindfulness of others in the last week.

Homework for this session:

Complete 'Finding and getting people to like you" and "Mindfulness of others" worksheets

Practice using assertiveness, listening and validation skills in different situations.