

Exploring INTERACTION STYLES



When we recognize that people have different interaction styles, we can improve team coherence and understanding, and foster more positive connections.

Use this activity to bring awareness to four common interaction styles:

- Passive
- Aggressive
- Passive Aggressive
- Assertive

Your team will learn to recognize which style(s) they may use when under stress, and how to employ a more positive and productive approach, both at work and at home.

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TIME TO COMPLETE: 10 to 15 minutes



Instructions:

- 1 Have participants review the definitions for **Passive**, **Aggressive** and **Passive Aggressive** on the worksheet individually.
- 2 Ask participants to think of a stressful or challenging situation where they've used one of these three interaction styles. This situation could be at work, home or elsewhere.

Note: We've all used these interaction styles at least once in our lives—or been on the receiving end of them. This doesn't mean you use the same interaction style in every scenario you face.
- 3 Keeping this scenario in mind and using the worksheet, ask participants to identify if their interaction style was passive, aggressive or passive aggressive.

Note: If time permits, encourage participants to think of an example for each of the interaction styles.
- 4 Based on the group's comfort level, ask participants to reflect individually, in pairs, or small groups on how this interaction style may have impacted the situation or event.
- 5 Next, review the definition for **Assertive** on the worksheet as a group.
- 6 Finish the activity by asking participants to write how they'd approach the same situation using an assertive style.

Discussion:

- Would using a different interaction style have changed the outcome of the situation you reflected on? If so, how?
- What impacted your interaction style (e.g. other external factors)?
- Do you have an interaction style that you tend to fall back on when under stress?
- Why is it more difficult to use an assertive communication style?
- What could help you use a more assertive communication style when faced with a stressful situation in the future?

Encourage your team to incorporate what they learned into their day-to-day interactions and reflect on how to use these strategies for future challenges. An assertive interaction style can help reduce conflict, resolve an issue and/or encourage direct and honest conversations but, like anything, it can take practice!

Exploring Interaction Styles

Aggressive

Prioritizes your needs above others. During aggressive communication, a person expresses their ideas and feelings without allowing others to do the same.

Assertive

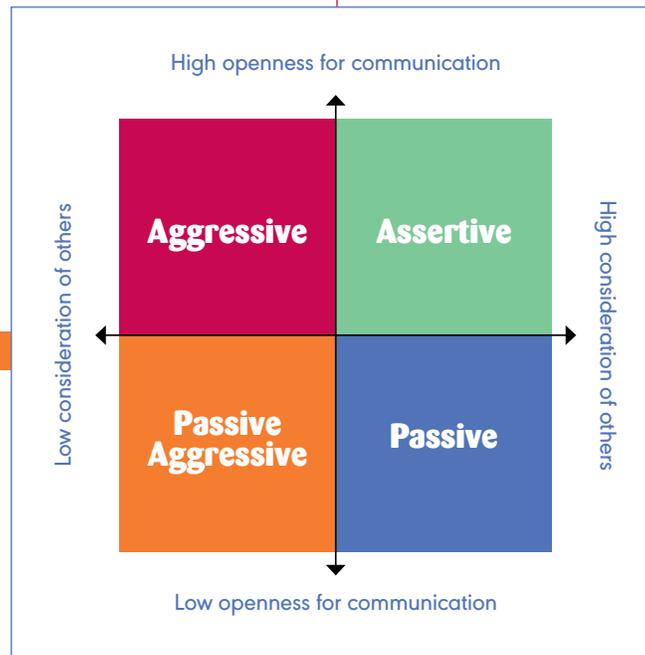
Prioritizes both peoples' needs and is defined by confidence and willingness to compromise. During assertive communication, a person expresses their own ideas and feelings, but also listens to and respects others' points of view.

Passive Aggressive

Priorities between your needs and others may vary. During passive aggressive communication, a person appears passive but subtly or indirectly expresses their ideas or feelings in either a hostile or indirect manner (e.g. tone, eye-rolling, etc.).

Passive

Prioritizes your needs below others. During passive communication, a person avoids expressing their ideas and feelings to others.



Sources

- Workplace Strategies for Mental Health. (2009-2021). *Identifying Your Interaction Style*. Retrieved from: <https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/resources/monitor-your-communication-style>
- *Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Communication*. (n.d.) Therapist Aid. Retrieved April 19, 2021 from: <https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/passive-aggressive-and-assertive-communication.pdf>