

Assertiveness

Another communication skill that relates to stress management is being assertive. It is healthy to express your needs in a way that does not harm another person nor minimize what you want to say. It is this direct, honest, and appropriate expression of your feelings that is termed assertiveness.

A clear indicator of whether a behavior is assertive, passive, or aggressive is the reaction of people to it. The following chart describes the characteristics of these three behaviors. After reading it, you can analyze your behaviors by responding to questions 1, 2, and 3 on the next page.

Characteristics of Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Behavior

Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect communication • Self-denying, and self-sacrificing • Failure to stand up for own goals and rights • Allows others to choose for them • Emotionally dishonest • Lack of goal achievement • Limited responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct communication • Inconsiderate of other people • Condescending or insulting • Rejects others • Cuts off communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct communication • Expresses emotions needs • Requesting without fault or insult • Open expression of feelings • High achiever

Behavioral Analysis Questions

Choose a behavior to analyze, then check off one or more responses to each question.

	Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
1. How do I feel when I engage in this behavior?	<input type="checkbox"/> Hurt <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious <input type="checkbox"/> Violated <input type="checkbox"/> Angry later <input type="checkbox"/> Stressed	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior <input type="checkbox"/> Powerful <input type="checkbox"/> In control <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty later <input type="checkbox"/> Stressed	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident <input type="checkbox"/> Respecting of self and others <input type="checkbox"/> Productive <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed
2. How does the other person feel about himself/herself when I engage in this behavior?	<input type="checkbox"/> Guilty <input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Hurt <input type="checkbox"/> Humiliated <input type="checkbox"/> Violated	<input type="checkbox"/> Valued <input type="checkbox"/> Respected <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciated
3. How does the other person feel toward me when I engage in this behavior?	<input type="checkbox"/> Pity <input type="checkbox"/> Irritation <input type="checkbox"/> Frustration	<input type="checkbox"/> Angry <input type="checkbox"/> Vengeful <input type="checkbox"/> Threatened	<input type="checkbox"/> Respectful <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciative <input type="checkbox"/> Unthreatened