



Purpose

The purpose of this document is to help you identify different communication styles and how they show up in your life.

Introduction

The four core communication styles help us identify the ways in which we approach conversation across a variety of contexts. Though different communication styles will be more relevant in specific contexts; overall, a general guideline is to practice moving toward an Assertive Communication style, as this is the most balanced of the four. Since we are not affixed to any one communication style, we are able to practice and build up our skills toward assertive communication.

Four Communication Styles

Here is a brief breakdown of the four communication styles and how they may look in day-to-day life:

(1) Passive Communication - This style shows up when we are uncomfortable with a confrontation or conflict. The fear of rejection and disapproval from others is distressing and a completely normal response. As a result, someone who is passively communicating may not speak their mind and end up agreeing to what is being said by others -- even when they have a different perspective. Signs of passive communication include: being overly apologetic, willingness to appease others, displaying poor eye contact, and retracted body posture.

When you find yourself expressing (or not) in this style, try maintaining a neutral body posture, voice, eye contact and start by expressing your needs slowly and steadily in a manner in which you are letting your thoughts be heard by the other person, without letting the fears or judgments hold you back.

(2) Aggressive Communication - This style often appears as adversarial, with words spoken functioning as an attack on others. When communicating in this style, protecting your own perspective ends up superseding a productive discussion on the conflict. As a result when communicating aggressively, one may often interrupt another person, talk over them, or resort to criticism and name-calling. Other signs of aggressive



communication include: loud tone of voice, finger-pointing, intense eye contact, and hostility.

When you find yourself doing this, try to take a step back, breathe, put yourself in their shoes and try to imagine how they might be feeling. If you find yourself needing more time to regain your composure, do not hesitate to let them know, take a longer break, and revisit the conversation at another time. Just make sure you decide on a specific time to revisit the issue.

(3) Passive-Aggressive Communication - This style involves being indirectly aggressive when communicating. On the outside, one who is communicating this way may say nothing is wrong, and at the same time feel as if they are burning up with anger. As a result, someone who is communicating this way is unable to express their true feelings in an effective manner. Passive-aggressive communication may look like: using sarcasm, giving backhanded compliments, giving the "silent treatment", and muttering to themselves.

When you find yourself doing this, try to ask yourself where this behavior is stemming from. What's hurting you that's leading to this kind of passive yet resentful behavior? Think about how you can approach this situation, while expressing your feelings and needs effectively. Remember - there's a possibility that the other person doesn't even know you are upset and engaging in such a behavior will lead to further confusion and conflict.

(4) Assertive Communication - Research has shown that this is the most effective style of communication. When one is able to communicate assertively they effectively, directly, and respectfully relay their perspective to others. In addition, they are willing to listen to others, consider their ideas, and seek out compromise. Signals of assertive communication include: using an appropriate speaking volume, having a steady tone of voice, making comfortable eye contact, listening to others without interrupting, and using "I" statements.

Your Sibly Coach is a great resource to help you build assertive communication skills! Send them a message and they will be happy to help get you started!