

Submissive, Assertive & Aggressive Communication

Use this worksheet to distinguish between the three communication styles and practice assertive communication.



Submissive Communication – You Win – I Lose

During submissive communication, we prioritize the needs and feelings of others at our own personal cost. We do not effectively express our own needs and default to self-sacrifice, avoidance, submissive agreement or people pleasing. This can lead to being taken for granted, inequality in relationships, being treated unfairly and exploitation by others.

Aggressive Communication – You Lose – I Win

During aggressive communication we prioritise our own needs, preferences and feelings over the needs of other people. This can be perceived as selfish, arrogant or self-centred. Other people can feel ignored, criticised or bullied. Aggressive communication ultimately leads to inequality in relationships and a sense of alienation.

Assertive Communication – I Win – You Win

During assertive communication the needs, wishes and feelings of both sides are considered in a balanced and respectful manner. This involves clearly presenting what we need and listening carefully to the needs of others. Assertive communication is all about deal-making; achieving what we want by giving something in return. It involves clarity of purpose, confidence and a willingness to flexibly compromise.

Practice Exercises

Identify the submissive, aggressive and assertive responses for each of the following scenarios:

Scenario	Your boss asks you to work late, whilst everyone else leaves on time.
Submissive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

Scenario	Your partner left a mess in the kitchen, but you are too busy to clean.
Submissive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

Scenario	You are served cold or poor standard food at a restaurant.
Submissive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

Scenario	Your friend asks to borrow money even though you can't really afford it.
Submissive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

Scenario	Your partner / friend makes a decision without consulting you first.
Submissive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	