

unit **5**

activity **34**

did i say that? different styles of communication

OVERVIEW: Students examine alternate ways to respond verbally in an uncomfortable situation and discern between aggressive, assertive, and passive communication. They fill out a questionnaire about their own style of responding in uncomfortable situations.

OBJECTIVES: To increase students' understanding of different styles of communication and their ability to formulate assertive responses; to improve their analytic and dialogue skills.

DURATION:
45–60 minutes

MATERIALS:
Copies of both worksheets (“Self-Assessment” and “Analyze this Response”) for each student, if possible.

TO PREPARE:
Make copies of the handouts, if possible. Otherwise, prepare to read them.

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Introduce the activity:

- Today we will learn about different styles of communication.
- Especially if we feel at all uncomfortable in a situation, we may not communicate clearly and in the way we want to.
- What are some reasons that we might have trouble expressing our wishes in the best way?
[Probe for the following reasons and write them on the board:]

I don't know how to express myself clearly.

I'm afraid that the other person will think poorly of me if I don't agree.

I'm afraid that I won't be listened to anyway, that what I say won't matter.

I'm afraid that I might lose my temper.

I find it easier to rely on intimidating the other person.

- First, we will look at the difference between aggressive, passive, and assertive communication. Then you will fill out a questionnaire about your own style of responding in an uncomfortable situation.
- What do you think is the difference between communicating passively and communicating aggressively? What do we mean by “assertive” communication? [Probe for: being honest; being direct; speaking about your feelings and needs; using assertive body language; speaking for yourself; communicating clearly but without aggressiveness.] What does it mean to communicate indirectly? [Probe for: not being totally passive, but failing to be direct.]

- 2 Ask the students to form pairs and pass out (or prepare to read aloud) the “Analyze This Response” worksheet. Explain:
 - With your partner, read the description of the conflict situation in the left column. Then read the various responses in the next column. For each response, check off whether that response is aggressive, passive, or assertive. For Conflict 5, make up a conflict-situation statement and different kinds of responses.
- 3 Review each conflict and ask students to provide the correct answers and to comment on how it feels to hear the aggressive response compared with the assertive one. (**Answer Key:** Responses a, f, i, and k are aggressive. Responses c, d, and h are passive. Responses b, e, g, and j are assertive.)
- 4 Pass out the “Self-Assessment” worksheet, and ask students to fill it out for themselves. (Alternatively, write the statements and the possible responses on the board, read them aloud, and ask students to note down their own responses.)
- 5 Close the discussion with the following questions:
 - What did you learn about your own style of communication?
 - Would it be useful to learn how to communicate assertively?

self-assessment: how do i communicate when i am feeling uncomfortable?

When I am in an uncomfortable situation with a boy, I tend to be:

- Passive Assertive, respectful Aggressive Indirect or manipulative

When I am in an uncomfortable situation with a girl, I tend to be:

- Passive Assertive, respectful Aggressive Indirect or manipulative

When I am in an uncomfortable situation with an adult male, I tend to be:

- Passive Assertive, respectful Aggressive Indirect or manipulative

When I am in an uncomfortable situation with an adult female, I tend to be:

- Passive Assertive, respectful Aggressive Indirect or manipulative

When I am in an uncomfortable situation with someone whom I do not view as my equal, I tend to be:

- Passive Assertive, respectful Aggressive Indirect or manipulative
 I cannot answer this because I view everyone as my equal.

For me, expressing feelings of anger is:

- Fairly easy (but I sometimes respond aggressively)
 Fairly easy (and I never respond aggressively or with violence)
 Neither easy nor difficult
 Somewhat or very difficult

For me, expressing when I feel vulnerable or weak is:

- Fairly easy (but I sometimes respond aggressively)
 Fairly easy (and I never respond aggressively or with violence)
 Neither easy nor difficult
 Somewhat or very difficult

ANALYZE THIS RESPONSE

CONFLICT	RESPONSE	Aggressive	Passive	Assertive
1 A boy and girl are going to have sex for the first time, but they don't have condoms. One of them says:	a. For all I know, you have HIV! You're a stupid idiot.			
	b. I also want to have sex, but only if we use condoms. I know where we can get them.			
	c. Oh. Okay, I guess.			
2 A boy is upset that the girl he is with was talking to another boy at a party. He says:	d. That was a boring party.			
	e. When you were talking to that guy, I thought you might want to be with him instead of me. That makes me feel bad.			
	f. I saw that! How dare you talk to that other guy when you went to the party with me?			
3 A boy asks a girl to go out with him. She does not want to. She says:	g. Thank you, but I do not want to. Sorry.			
	h. Um.... Okay.			
	i. I would never go out with someone like you. Just get away from me.			
4 A girl is upset that her friend Lulu has been making fun of her to Amina. She says:	j. Lulu, I'm upset that you were making fun of me.			
	k. Lulu, you're the dumbest person in the world and I'm going to spread stories about you!			
5 Think of another conflict situation. Write it here, and then write three responses in the column to the right.		×		
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