

# Learning material on Negotiation and Communication Styles

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Assertive, aggressive and passive behaviours.....	1
Summary of the main characteristics of the three styles .....	2
A comparison of passive, assertive, and aggressive behaviours (common underpinning characteristics) .....	7
Hand-out - Negotiation and Communication Styles.....	9
References.....	9

## Introduction

The idea of negotiation embraced within the ENACT project, is a concept of negotiation as social – relational competence based on effective communication, that can be discovered, developed, improved through training (and personal development paths). Negotiating is the process of effectively communicating back and forth (constructive feedback process), in order to identify a joint view or solution about differing needs or ideas (understand, inquiry, explore, propose). Being able to negotiate an integrative and collaborative solution implies adopting an assertive style of communication.

Moreover, interestingly it has been found that self-efficacy is related to social skills (Moe & Zeiss, 1982), and assertiveness (Lee, 1983, 1984). Are there any relationships between self-efficacy and assertiveness, and related positive effect on negotiation processes? This is an additional research question that ENACT would like to answer.

## Assertive, aggressive and passive behaviours

Following will be described a model of communication based on 3 different styles of communication: assertive, aggressive or passive. According to this model the

communication process can be seen as occurring along a continuum from passive styles on one end to aggressive style the other, by passing through an assertive communicational attitude.

Both passive and aggression behaviors distort the possibility of creating positive and constructive relations through mutual and reciprocal processes.

With **passive** style (fig.1), people communicate in a way that tend to continuously please others at the expense of personal interests, needs and goals. This styles mainly is expression of avoiding standing up for ourselves, our needs and rights, and give too much regard to the opinions and the preferences of others. One of the main purposes of passivity is avoiding the discomfort of conflict. As immediate results passive people experience reduction of anxiety, sense of guilt, as they feel that personal disclosure can upset, disappoint, hurt, and offend others. However the long term effect can lead to loss of confidence, frustration, resentment and aggressive reactions. At the other extreme the **aggressive** style (fig. 2) represents a way to communicate mainly with hostile attitude, depreciating and bullying with the aim to protect personal interests at detrimental of others. Relationships are based on fear, resentment and intimidation. This style fuels the unhealthy and unrealistic idea that we are superior to others, and consequently consider our rights and needs are more important than others'.

As immediate payoff people by using this style experience power and control, however the long term on themselves is detrimental as they feel to be in a continue state of alert from external attach from others.

Being **assertive** (fig.3) involves awareness our own needs, rights wants and goals and asking for them to be met while acknowledging the needs, rights, wants and goals of others. In contrast to passive and aggressive behaviours, assertiveness is a way of communicating our feelings, thoughts, and beliefs in an open, honest way without violating rights feelings, needs and opinions of others. Assertion is not about winning, as involves being able to effectively express thoughts, needs and feelings, and not at the expense of others.

## Summary of the main characteristics of the three styles

### Aggression

- getting our own way, no matter what
- getting our point across at other people's expense
- getting people to do things they don't want to do
- being violent, hostile, forceful
- interrupting others
- winning at all costs

- always putting our own needs first

### **Passivity**

- do not express ourselves for fear of upsetting people
- avoiding conflict
- saying yes when we want to say no
- always putting other people's needs first
- going along with things we don't like or agree with
- apologising excessively
- inwardly burning with anger and frustration
- being vague about our ideas and what we want
- justifying our actions to other people
- appearing indecisive

### **Assertiveness**

- being open and honest with ourselves and other people
- listening to other people's points of view
- showing understanding of other people's situations
- having self-respect and respect for others
- dealing with our feelings
- dealing with conflict
- being equal
- expressing ideas clearly, but not at the expense of others
- compromising, negotiating

In summary, by communicating assertively:

- our self-confidence increases
- we stand a better chance of getting what we need to take care of ourselves
- we are properly understood
- other people know exactly what our needs are
- we are more open to receiving feedback
- our relationships are based on reality rather than illusion
- we feel better for expressing our feelings
- we have fewer situations that are unresolved
- even if we do not resolve a situations, we feel better for having tried

<b>PASSIVE</b>	
<b>Characteristics of the behaviour</b>	Lack of initiative, force. Being continually submissive and compliant, avoiding to stand up for ourselves, our wants, ideas. Intent: to please other even at our expense
<b>Purpose Immediate Payoff</b>	Avoid unpleasant situations, discomfort of conflict, confrontation, negative feelings (upset, disappoint, hurt, offend)
<b>Our feeling when we act in this way</b>	Often angry, and resentful later, frustration builds up, disappointed with ourselves. Energy waste in pleasing and satisfying others, loss of confidence and sense of identity: we are there to serve others, and others are there to use us. Don't get what we want, we are used by others
<b>Unhealthy Beliefs</b>	Others have poor resources to handle disappointment and frustration. We are completely responsible for other people feelings (others have the capability to manage their emotions). Others are more worthy, more intelligent and superior to you and we LESS.
<b>Other people's feelings about us when we act this way</b>	Guilty (as your continuous attempt of pleasing them) Superior (they can always get what they want) They can <u>always</u> count on us (we never says NO)

**Fig. 1.** Passive style of communication.

<b>AGGRESSIVE</b>	
<b>Characteristics of the behaviour</b>	Approach to communication, which is mainly hostile, forceful, depreciating or bullying. Expresses wants, ideas, feelings, and gets your own way at the expense of others. Intent: to dominate.
<b>Purpose Immediate Payoff</b>	Feel superior, powerful. Control on others. We get what we want
<b>Our feeling when we act in this way</b>	Often get what we want. Drain your energies, continue state of alert: to be prepared for any external attack from others.
<b>Unhealthy Beliefs</b>	We are superior and our rights and needs are more important than others. Others are there to serve us, and our preferences come first before all others.
<b>Other people's feelings about us when we act this way</b>	Feel small, inferior, incompetent, foolish, worthless, tricked or manipulated for your own ends

**Fig. 2.** Aggressive style of communication.

<b>ASSERTIVE</b>	
<b>Characteristics of the behaviour</b>	Knowing our own needs, rights, wants and goals and asking for them to be met while acknowledging the needs, rights, wants and goals of the other person. Expresses wants, ideas, and feelings in direct and appropriate , EFFECTIVE ways. Intent: to communicate without being passive or aggressive
<b>Purpose Long Term Payoff</b>	Respected by others (ourselves!). Improved self-confidence Relationships are improved (enduring)
<b>Our feeling when we act in this way</b>	Confident. Able to effectively express ourselves. Honest with ourselves and others
<b>Healthy Beliefs</b>	Others , as source of wealth. Have the resource to cope with uncomfortable emotions, as each individual is emotionally responsible
<b>Other people's feelings about us when we act this way</b>	Equal rights, capable, important, worth, understood

**Fig. 3.** Assertive style of communication

## A comparison of passive, assertive, and aggressive behaviours (common underpinning characteristics)

	<b>PASSIVE</b>	<b>AGGRESSIVE</b>	<b>ASSERTIVE</b>
<b>Characteristics of the behaviour</b>	Does not express wants, ideas, and feelings, or expresses them in self-deprecating way. Intent: to please	Expresses wants, ideas, and feelings at the expense of others. Intent: to dominate	Expresses wants, ideas, and feelings in direct and appropriate ways. Intent: to communicate
<b>Our feeling when we act in this way</b>	Anxious, disappointed with ourselves. Often angry and resentful later.	Self-centred, superior. Sometimes embarrassed later.	Confident, feel good about yourself at the time and later
<b>Other people's feelings about themselves when we act this way</b>	Guilty or superior	Overpowered, hurt	Respected, valued
<b>Other people's feelings about us when we act this way</b>	Irritation, pity, frustration	Angry, vengeful, rancour	Usually respect
<b>Outcome</b>	Don't get what we want; anger builds up.	Often get what we want at the expense of others. Defence to the next attack	Often get what we want
<b>Payoff (immediate)</b>	Avoid unpleasant situation, avoid conflict, tension, confrontation	Feel superior, powerful, We get what we want	Feel good; respected by others Improved self-confidence Relationships are improved (enduring)

	PASSIVE	AGGRESSIVE	ASSERTIVE
Characteristics of the behaviour	Lack of initiative, force. Being continually submissive and compliant, avoiding to stand up for ourselves, our wants, ideas Intent: to please other even at our expense	Approach to communication, which is mainly hostile, forceful, depreciating or bullying. Expresses wants, ideas, and feelings at the expense of others. Intent: to dominate. Getting your own way to the detriment of others at the expense of others.	Knowing our own needs, rights, wants and goals and asking for them to be met while acknowledging the needs, rights, wants and goals of the other person. Expresses wants, ideas, and feelings in direct and appropriate ways. Intent: to communicate without being passive or aggressive
Purpose / Payoff	Avoid unpleasant situations, discomfort of conflict, confrontation, negative feelings (upset, disappoint, hurt, offend)	Feel superior, powerful. Control on others. We get what we want	Feel good; respected by others. Improved self-confidence Relationships are improved (enduring)
Our feeling when we act in this way	Often angry, and resentful later, frustration builds up, disappointed with ourselves. Energy waste in pleasing and satisfying others, loss of confidence and sense of identity: we are there to serve others, and others are there to use us. Don't get what we want, we are used by others	Often get what we want. Drain your energies, continue state of alert: to be prepared for any external attack from others.	Confident. Able to effectively express ourselves. Honest with ourselves and others
Unhealthy/Healthy Beliefs	Others have poor resources to handle disappointment and frustration. We are completely responsible for other people feelings (and do not consider that other have the capability to manage their emotions). Other are more worthy, more intelligent and superior to you and we LESS.	We are superior and our rights and needs are more important than others. Others are there to serve us, and our preferences come first before all others.	OTHERS , AS SOURCE OF WEALTH-THE RESOURCES TO COPE WITH UNCOMFORTABLE EMOTIONS. EACH INDIVIDUAL IS EMOTIONALLY RESPONSIBLE.
Other people's feelings about us when we act this way	Guilty (as your continuous attempt of pleasing them) Superior (they can always get what they want) They can always count on us (we never says NO)	Feel small, inferior, incompetent, foolish, worthless, tricked or manipulated for your own ends	Equal rights, resourceful, important, worth, understood



## **Hand-out - Negotiation and Communication Styles**

### **References**

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