

Three Styles of Communication

Passive

In passive behavior, the focus is what others think, not on what you want or need. Passiveness often comes from feelings of insecurity, needing approval, perfectionism, and wanting to be liked, and not focusing on what you want or need. Passive means giving in, avoiding, and not expressing your feelings. By being passive, you can disrespect yourself.

- *Body language:* no eye contact, not facing the person
- *Voice:* soft spoken, inaudible, uncertain, weak tone
- *Words:* apologetic, “Ok, I’ll do what you want.”

Aggressive

The goal of aggressive behavior is to show power. Yelling, put downs, and physical violence are part of aggression. By showing aggression, you can disrespect others.

- *Body Language:* getting too close to the person (in their face), shaking a fist or pointing a finger
- *Voice:* shouting, bullying tone, teasing tone
- *Words:* sarcastic, rude, empty threats, focusing on the person instead of the problem; “You’re stupid.” “Well, aren’t you smart.” “You better stop or I’ll make sure you never have another playdate.”

Assertive

In assertive behavior, the goal is clear communication. Focusing on what you want or need, you express yourself in a clear and positive way. Communicating assertively involves being respectful. As Becky Bailey (2000) puts it, “being respectful means focusing on improving behavior rather than on getting children to feel bad about their actions.” By being assertive, you respect both yourself and others.

- *Body Language:* face the person, make eye contact, stand tall, shoulders back, chin up
- *Voice:* firm, clear and audible, confident tone
- *Words:* speaks about problems or situations, not people; speaks up for themselves and others, “I would like you to stop pushing me.” “I feel frustrated when I trip over your shoes in the hallway. Please put them away before you start playing.”

References

- Bailey, B. A. (2000). *Conscious discipline: 7 basic skills for brain smart classroom management*. Orlando: Loving Guidance, Inc.
- Davies, L. (2007). *Assertiveness training for children*. Bend, OR: Kelly Bear Press, Inc.