

COMMUNICATION STYLES

Hello everyone,

Thanks for joining me. My name is Sadaf and I'm a predoctoral intern at the UCLA Counseling and Psychological Services or CAPS. I know that these are really difficult times in so many different ways. We're putting these videos together as brief introductions to hopefully longer conversations with you. In this specific video, I'll briefly cover the four major communication styles that we often intentionally and unintentionally use in our relationships. I'll share with you what each style sounds like so you can reflect on your own communication style and also on those around you that you have different relationships with.

The four communication styles I'll be covering are: Passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive. We'll start with passive communication.

Passive communication often involves holding yourself back to avoid conflict or tension. In doing so, we avoid expressing our true feelings or needs, and maybe our personal rights or boundaries too. We've seen that passive communication often leads to misunderstandings and it creates built-up anger or resentment. I want to make sure you know that even though passive communication sounds problematic, it can sometimes be really helpful too and so it's necessary to mention that. For example, when there is the potential for violence, sometimes it's much safer to be passive so the situation doesn't escalate to violence and put you in direct harm.

Aggressive communication involves expressing own feelings, needs and desires while ignoring others' rights or boundaries. It can involve blaming others, intimidating, criticizing, threatening, or attacking. Normally when we're engaging in aggressive communication, we feel defensive or hostile when we're confronted. And we often tend to alienate and really hurt others. I want to note that aggressive communication can also be needed in that it helps meet our needs quickly -- for example, if we are in a violent situation and it feels safer to be aggressive to protect ourselves then aggressive communication can be helpful in that situation.

Passive-aggressive communication appears passive on the surface but really subtly is actually acting out of anger. In this way, we exert control over others by being sarcastic, indirect, or avoidant of the conversation. This style often involves limited consideration for others' rights, needs, or feelings, so in this way it is similar to aggressive communication. While passive communication can be helpful, when paired with subtle aggression, it's going to stay in the way of building healthy relationships.

Assertive communication is the style to strive for as we often see that it leads to respectful and long-term relationships. Being assertive means being politely direct, honest and it communicates our thoughts and feelings as they are. There is respect for others' needs and rights while we also assert our own. But please note again though that if your personal safety is threatened, it might not be helpful to be assertive because your needs and rights are likely going

to get violated so perhaps passive OR aggressive communication may be needed depending on the situation you're in.

I want to remind you that we all likely engage in one of these styles at one point or another. Our aim is to practice to be assertive about our needs while respecting others' needs as well. But, depending on the situation (for example when confronted with violence) this may change.

For more information, know that UCLA campus resources are available to you for longer and deeper conversations about communication in relationships. They can also offer a space to practice communication skills. You can refer to them using the following websites for CAPS, RISE, and CARE to reach us. Thanks so much for showing up for yourself and take good care!