

COMMUNICATION STYLES

Passive / Withdrawal

You don't directly express your feelings, thoughts, and wishes. You communicate them indirectly by frowning, crying, or whispering something under your breath. Or you may withhold your feelings and wishes entirely. In the passive style you tend to smile a lot and subordinate your needs to those of others. You also probably do more than your share of listening. If you do speak up directly, you make disclaimers such as "I'm no expert... I'm really not sure I really shouldn't be saying this, but..." You find it very difficult to make requests. When someone asks you to do something that you don't want to do, you're inclined to do it or make an excuse rather than say no. A passive speaking style includes a soft, weak, even wavering voice. Pauses and hesitations are common. You are likely to be at a loss for words. You may ramble, be vague, and use the phrase "I mean" and "you know" often. You frequently rely on others to guess what you want to say. Your posture is likely to be slouched, and perhaps you will lean against something for support. Your hands are apt to be cold, sweaty, and fidgety. Eye contact is difficult for you; you tend to look down or away. Because you are often not saying what you mean, you don't look like you mean what you say.

Aggressive / Reactive

You are quite capable of stating how you feel, what you think, and what you want, but often at the expense of others' rights and feelings. You tend to humiliate others by using sarcasm or humorous put-downs. You are likely to go on the attack when you don't get your way, and you stir up guilt and resentment in others by pointing a finger of blame. Your sentences often begin with "You..." followed by an attack or a negative label. You use absolute terms such as "always" and "never" and describe things in a ways that implies that you're always right and superior. When you are behaving aggressively you tend to move with an air of superiority and strength. Your style may run the gamut from cold and deadly quiet to flippant and sarcastic to loud and shrill. Your eyes are narrowed and expressionless. Your posture is that of a solid rock: feet planted apart, hands on hips, jaw clenched and jutting out, gestures rigid, abrupt, and intimidating. Sometimes you point your finger or make a fist. You are so intent on being right that you don't really hear what others are saying, even when you ask them a direct question.

Assertive / Responsive / Responsible

You make direct statements regarding your feelings, thoughts, and wishes. You stand up for your rights and take into account the rights and feelings of the other. You listen attentively, and let other people know that you have heard them. You are open to negotiation and compromise, but not at the expense of your own rights and dignity. You can make direct requests and direct refusals. You can give and receive compliments. You can start and stop a conversation. You can deal effectively with criticism, without becoming hostile or defensive. When you are behaving assertively, you convey an air of assured strength and empathy. Your voice is relaxed, well modulated, and firm. While you are comfortable with direct eye contact - you don't stare. Your eyes communicate openness and honesty. Your posture is balanced and erect.