

Exercise 6: Aggressive, Passive or Assertive?**Notes for educators**

Have you ever walked away from a situation and wished you had handled it differently? Do you avoid confrontation? Assertiveness is the skill of clearly representing your thoughts and feelings in a mutually respectful way that does not employ guilt, infringe on others' rights or use emotional blackmail.

Our students encounter behaviours in interpersonal relationships that are both healthy and unhealthy. Aggressive behaviour can silence people. Most of us have sometimes used aggressive communication strategies, which are symptomatic of a hierarchical culture that embodies power disparities. Aggressive communication is characteristic of those men who abuse women, as a way to control their female partners (and, of course, the opposite can also be true). This educational activity aims to give students the tools they need to identify and handle situations when dating and interpersonal relationship behaviour is unhealthy.

Much of communication is conveyed in body language. Being in tune with what someone's body is saying is arguably more important than understanding the words being used. Depending on cultural beliefs, attitudes about assertiveness and individualism may vary widely among your students. We suggest you handle these differences sensitively while maintaining the message that students should not feel any shame or guilt for expecting respect and safety.

Please visit www.whiteribbon.ca, Educators section, for performance-based assessment task ideas and how teachers across Canada are applying this lesson

Invite students to visit www.whiteribbon.ca, Youth section, so they can post their comments and see what students across Canada have to say about gender stereotyping and violence against women. We have provided a bookmark (BLM-B) for your students.

Ideal For

- Co-operative learning
- Community building
- Interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence building
- Authentic problem task-based learning

**Materials**

- One copy for each three students of Assertive, Aggressive and Passive Communication worksheet (BLM 6)
- BLM-A Ticket Out the Door
- BLM-B White Ribbon Campaign bookmark

Lesson Time

70 to 100 minutes

General learning objectives

(For specific provincial curriculum linkages, visit www.whiteribbon.ca, click on the Educators tab and then go to Provincial Curriculum Expectations)

- To learn the difference between assertive, aggressive and passive communication.
- To see the connection between aggressive communication and abusive behaviour in the context of men's violence against women.

Introduction (5 minutes)

1. Recall ground rules for all classroom discussions. Remind students that you are counting on them to enable each student to respond as an individual who is owed respect and not measured against a stereotype.
2. Review the three qualities that are elements of healthy relationships (respect, communication and emotional/physical boundaries).
3. This activity will focus on communication, and more specifically the differences between aggressive, passive and assertive communication. Consider telling your students a story of a time you experienced either assertive, aggressive or passive communication and how you felt, what you said, how you responded and what you learned from the situation.

Activity (20 minutes)

1. Using a flipchart or board, define aggressive, passive and assertive communication. Below is a chart with a list of possible responses.
2. You may wish to begin with the “sounds like, feels like and looks like” and then come up with the “what is it?”

Communication	What is it?	Sounds like	Feels like	Looks like (body language)
Aggressive	<p>Communication where one person wins and the other loses.</p> <p>Direct, self-enhancing.</p> <p>Self-expressive, derogatory.</p> <p>A win-lose situation.</p> <p>Choose for others.</p> <p>Inappropriately honest (tactless).</p>	<p>Commands.</p> <p>Insults.</p> <p>Sentences start with verbs.</p> <p>“What you need to do is...”</p> <p>“What were you thinking?”</p> <p>“Go and see them now...”</p> <p>Interrupts while other person is speaking.</p> <p>Loud voice.</p> <p>Sounds intimidating.</p> <p>"You make me so mad..."</p> <p>"You made me do it."</p> <p>False generalizations: “You always...”</p>	<p>Someone is taking power away from me.</p> <p>Someone is trying to make me feel stupid.</p> <p>Someone is angry with me.</p> <p>My decision or judgment isn't good enough.</p> <p>I don't really matter.</p> <p>I can't disagree with this person and if I try to, s/he won't listen.</p> <p>I'm shocked by how this person is treating me.</p> <p>This person is being superior controlling.</p> <p>I feel humiliated, hurt or resentful.</p>	<p>Pointing.</p> <p>Accusing.</p> <p>Staring with intent.</p> <p>Rolling eyes.</p> <p>Arms folded.</p> <p>Angry and/or sarcastic voice.</p> <p>Impatient.</p> <p>Possibly nervous.</p>
Assertive	<p>Healthy, open communication where both points of view are valued.</p> <p>Choose for self.</p> <p>Appropriately honest.</p> <p>Direct, self-respecting, self-expressing, straight-forward.</p> <p>A win-win situation.</p>	<p>Respect and value for each other's point of view.</p> <p>Working towards a compromise; "I" statements like "I believe we need to..." or "I did not intend that so perhaps we can try this. What do you think?"</p>	<p>I can say what is on my mind.</p> <p>This person treats me with respect.</p> <p>I can disagree with this person and that's okay.</p> <p>Although this person may be disappointed, s/he won't judge me even if I have bad news to tell him/her.</p>	<p>Eye contact.</p> <p>Not interrupting.</p> <p>I have this person's full attention.</p> <p>Projects self-confidence and self-worth.</p> <p>Remains calm.</p>
Passive	<p>Allow others to choose for you.</p> <p>Indirect self-denying, inhibited.</p> <p>In win-lose situations this communication style loses.</p> <p>If you do get your own way, it is indirectly.</p>	<p>Indifferent.</p> <p>Aloof.</p> <p>Just follow the group.</p> <p>Go with the crowd.</p> <p>Emotionally dishonest</p>	<p>This person really doesn't care.</p> <p>Whatever happens will just happen.</p> <p>I can disagree or agree with the person and s/he won't care.</p> <p>This person has no backbone; Anxious, ignored, helpless, manipulated.</p> <p>Angry at yourself, and/or others.</p>	<p>No eye contact.</p> <p>Bad, slouched posture.</p> <p>Not giving full attention.</p>

Group Learning Activity (30 minutes)

1. Introduce the concept of what a “bystander” can do to help in the situation. If you see someone acting aggressively, how can you help the receiver of the aggressive communication?
2. We have provided an example of scenarios for each communication method (Exemplar of BLM 6). You may wish to share this exemplar with your students or use it only as a guide.
3. Divide students into groups of three. Give each group a copy of Assertive, Aggressive and Passive communication worksheet (BLM 6).
4. As a group, students will complete the worksheet either by using direct examples from their own lives or by coming up with fictional scenarios for each communication method. In their groups, they will think of ways they can handle (or have handled) these situations.

Skit preparation and delivery — (30 minutes)

As you check in with each group, ask them to pick one of their examples to present as a skit to the class. In each group of three students, one student will take the role of Communicator, one will be the Receiver and the other will be the Bystander. Students will rehearse their one-minute-or-less skit and present it to the class. After each skit ask the class:

- What type of communication was used?
- Did the Receiver handle the scenario in an assertive way?
- Did the Bystander handle the scenario in an assertive way?

Conclusion: Class discussion (10 minutes)

- How can aggressive behaviour be related to violence against women?
- What happens when aggressive behaviour is not confronted?
- What role can bystanders play?
- Over time, what happens to people who communicate passively?
- What are the benefits of using an assertive communication strategy?

Lesson assessment (5 minutes)

Ask students to complete a Ticket Out the Door (BLM-A).

Give students a bookmark (BLM-B) so they can visit www.whiteribbon.ca to voice their opinions and see what other youth are saying.

Exemplar of BLM 6 Assertive, Aggressive and Passive Communication Worksheet

Communication Type	Scenario	How is Communicator acting?	How does the Receiver act	What can the Bystander do/say?
Assertive	The principal (Communicator) was speaking to me in the hall about the good job I did on my science project.	Treating me with respect. Acknowledging my hard work. Paid attention to what I was saying and not what was going on in the hallway.	Happy. Wanted to share with rincipal how much I liked my science class and how I want to study science all the time.	Listen. Not interrupt. Offer words of encouragement to Receiver.
Aggressive	Jeb and Renee have been dating for about three months. Jeb gets angry when Renee has to go to class without him and he thinks other guys want to get with Renee. One day, when Renee walks back to their locker with Rizwan, Jeb (with his arms folded and in a angry voice) says, "What exactly do you two think you are doing?"	He is acting superior and controlling. He thinks he owns Renee. He doesn't trust or respect Renee.	Scared, unsure. Silenced. Angry. Caught off guard. Unsure what to say but wants him to stop making a scene.	Assess the safety of confronting Jeb. Confront Jeb using "I" statements such as "I feel you are treating Renee poorly." Either during the incident or after it, tell Renee and Rizwan that you feel they were treated aggressively by Jeb.
Passive	Fatima (Communicator) sits on the yearbook committee. She is always working on the project after school and over every lunch hour. Angela offers to help her because she knows she is supposed to be working on the project with Fatima. However Fatima seems aloof and just shrugs her shoulders when Angela talks to her about it.	Vague, unsure of herself, seems a bit shy. Makes Angela feel she has to guess what Fatima's needs are. Angela is frustrated.	Not sure what Fatima wants. Angela asks for clarification but Fatima is reluctant. Makes Angela frustrated and Angela wants to cut the conversation short. Angela feels Fatima is incompetent.	Listens. Tries to guess what the problem might be. Tells Fatima that she shouldn't have to do it all alone.

Assertive, Aggressive and Passive Communication Worksheet

Group Names: _____

Communication Type	Scenario	How is Communicator acting?	How does the Receiver act	What can the Bystander do/say?
Assertive				
Aggressive				
Passive				

My Ticket Out the Door ...

Name:

.....

Date:

.....

What did you learn today?

.....

.....

Will your learning change the way you see or do things in your life?
If so, how?

.....

.....

Do you want to learn more about this topic?
If so, what do you want to learn more about?

.....

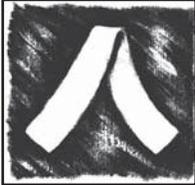
.....

What do you think about the problem of violence against women and girls?
Visit www.whiteribbon.ca and add your thoughts, opinions and solutions to our message board!

BLM B



**For more information about the White Ribbon Campaign,
please visit our website at www.whiteribbon.ca**



**For more information about the White Ribbon Campaign,
please visit our website at www.whiteribbon.ca**



**For more information about the White Ribbon Campaign,
please visit our website at www.whiteribbon.ca**



**For more information about the White Ribbon Campaign,
please visit our website at www.whiteribbon.ca**



**For more information about the White Ribbon Campaign,
please visit our website at www.whiteribbon.ca**



**For more information about the White Ribbon Campaign,
please visit our website at www.whiteribbon.ca**



**For more information about the White Ribbon Campaign,
please visit our website at www.whiteribbon.ca**



**For more information about the White Ribbon Campaign,
please visit our website at www.whiteribbon.ca**