

## HOW TO BE ASSERTIVE WITHOUT BEING AGGRESSIVE

Sometimes relationships develop patterns where one person is unwilling or afraid to express themselves openly. This can be due to the fear it will generate from the other person or simply a pattern of passive or passive aggressive behavior that has been reinforced. The other person may even use emotional blackmail to keep you in line.

Here's a quick outline of the three main communication behaviors. See which one you use most frequently.



	<b>Passive</b>	<b>Assertive</b>	<b>Aggressive</b>
<b>Belief</b>	I don't matter	We both matter	You don't matter
<b>Payoff</b>	Avoids unpleasant situations.	Achieves goals mostly. If this does not occur, there are feelings of self-worth which result from being straight forward. Self-confidence improves and relationships become open and honest.	Vents anger and achieves goals in the short term.
<b>Problem</b>	Needs are not met; anger builds up; feelings arise of low self-worth.	You still may feel distant from others who don't handle open relationships well or who have great difficulty expressing their needs or those who wish to dominate.	Alienation from others; feelings of frustration, bitterness and isolation.

### AND SOME MORE DETAILS...

	<b>Passive</b>	<b>Assertive</b>	<b>Aggressive</b>
	<b>I Lose / You Win</b>	<b>I Win / You Win</b>	<b>I Win / You Lose</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit to another's power.</li> <li>• Resign to the situation.</li> <li>• Withdraw to avoid, to refuse to deal with own needs and concerns.</li> <li>• Suppress at least to the other person, the distress felt.</li> <li>• Surrender own needs in hasty compromise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share power or work towards it.</li> <li>• Unfold the opportunity.</li> <li>• Withdraw to consider needs and concerns of self and others.</li> <li>• Return to address the issue as appropriate.</li> <li>• Contain discomfort carefully, if you choose now to deal with it at a more appropriate time.</li> <li>• Seek agreement which is fair to all involved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control, demand.</li> <li>• Punish, reward.</li> <li>• Bulldoze to punish, to refuse to deal with other's needs and concerns.</li> <li>• Explode, dumping responsibility on the other person and denying ownership of any part of the problem.</li> <li>• Manipulate while appearing to compromise.</li> </ul>



## BUILDING AN “I” STATEMENT

“I” statements are a great way to be assertive without being aggressive. They work well because you are standing up for yourself without criticizing the other person. Let’s give it a try:

- Describe a recent situation where you wish you had expressed yourself better.
- Now, use the guide below to create an “I” statement that would have served you well.

### STEP 1 – DESCRIBE THE SITUATION FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Describe the situation from your perspective without assigning blame. Be as objective and neutral as possible.

Start with the word(s) “When \_\_\_\_\_” or “When you \_\_\_\_\_”

Example: “When you make changes to our plans without giving me a chance to have input....”

### STEP 2 – YOUR RESPONSE

Tell the other person how this impacts you.

Start with the words(s) “I feel \_\_\_\_\_” or “I feel like \_\_\_\_\_”

Never say “You make me feel \_\_\_\_\_”, because the truth is that no one can control how you feel unless you let them.

Example: “I feel powerless” OR “I feel like making my own separate plans.”

### STEP 3 – YOUR PREFERRED OUTCOME

Tell the other person what you would like to have happen. Be careful not to make a demand. This is a request.

Start with the words “And what I would like is \_\_\_\_\_”

Example: “And what I would like is to be consulted before you make commitments that involve me.”

## NOW YOU TRY IT!

Think of a recent occasion when you wanted to let someone else know that you were unhappy or dissatisfied with something. Build an “I” statement that gets your message across in an assertive way without being aggressive.

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Your Description	Your Response	Your Request
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