
Effective Communication

Practice active listening and assertivity

Speaker and Listener (Part I)

Pair 1: Maria Antonia & Matĭss

Pair 2: Noa & Vilma

Pair 3: Isabel & Uldis

Pair 4: Antonio & Daiva

Pair 5: Linda & Sophie

- Divide in pairs.
- Describe yourself to the other participant- give as much information as you can!
The other participant can ask questions.
- You will have **10 minutes** (5 for each participant): for 5 minutes you will be the speaker, and for the other 5 minutes you will be the listener.

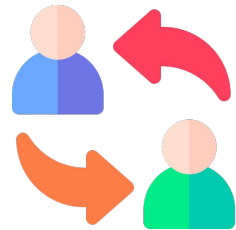


Can you hear me? (Part II)

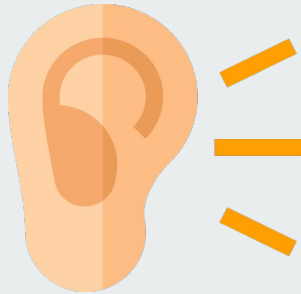
Describe yourself to all the other members of the class.

Only one rule:

You have to describe yourself
pretending to be the other person!



Debriefing



- What was the most challenging thing in this exercise?
- How did you feel during the activity?
- What do you think your listening level was?
- Were you listening passively or actively?
- Do you think we are more used to listening passively or actively in our daily lives?

There are different types of listening

PASSIVE LISTENING

ACTIVE LISTENING

Passive listening

Ineffective listening, in which you do not pay attention to what the speaker wants to communicate.

Passive listening

TYPICAL BEHAVIOURS:

- Interpreting **arbitrarily** what has been said
- **Interrupting** who is talking
- Answering with **irrelevant or inconsistent statements**
- Thinking about **how to reply** while the other is speaking



Active listening

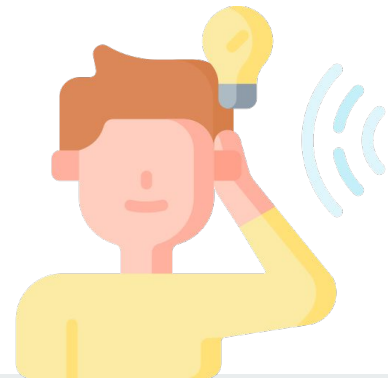
Careful listening, an active process and a conscious decision in order to fully understand what the speaker wants to communicate

How to actively listen?

- Request clarifications
- Make questions
- Paraphrase
- Be aware of feelings

Listening is not the same as hearing!

It is the first step in identifying a problem and finding solutions. It is important to listen not only to the words, but also to the **emotions** of the speaker.



6 KEY ACTIVE LISTENING SKILLS



1. PAY ATTENTION.



2. WITHHOLD JUDGEMENT.



3. REFLECT.



4. CLARIFY.



5. SUMMARIZE.



6. SHARE.



Center for Creative Leadership®

Source: <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/coaching-others-use-active-listening-skills/>

Tips for active listening

DOs

- Listen more than you talk
- Let the speaker finish before you respond
- Ask open-ended questions
- Remain attentive to what's being said
- Be aware of your own biases
- Manage your own emotions
- Give verbal and nonverbal reassurance that you are listening
- Listen both content and feelings

DON'Ts

- Dominate the conversation
- Interrupt
- Finish the speaker's sentence
- Jump to conclusions
- Respond with blaming or accusatory language
- Demonstrate impatience or multitask
- Mentally compose your responses about what to say next
- Listen with biases or shut out new ideas



Assertive communication

Communication style scenarios

You've just received an important assignment with a tight deadline.

You know that you need assistance from Sue, a co-worker, to get it done.

Identify the following communication styles and pick which you think would be best.



Communication style scenario

“Sue, I’m a bit stuck with this project and need to get it moving quickly. Can you pause what you’re doing and go through it with me now? It shouldn’t take too long, and I’ll show you what needs to be done.”

Communication style scenario

“Hi Sue, sorry to interrupt. I’ve just been given a project and I’m not entirely sure how to handle part of it. If you happen to have a bit of time later, could you maybe help me? It’s not super urgent. No worries if you’re tied up. Just let me know when’s the best time for you and I’ll adjust my schedule.”

Communication style scenario

“Hey, Sue, remember last week when things got hectic and we all had to jump in and support each other? I’m in a similar situation now with this project. You’re usually quite good at these things when you have the time, so I thought I’d check if you can help... if not, I guess I’ll figure something out.”

Communication style scenario

“Sue, I’ve been assigned a project that needs to be completed soon, and your experience could really help with one part of it. Would you be available to go over it together later today and see how you might contribute?”

Communication styles

Passive

Emotionally dishonest, indirect, inhibited, self-denying, blaming, apologetic.

“Others’ rights and needs take precedence over mine”

Passive Aggressive

Emotionally dishonest, indirect. Self-denying at first. Self-enhancing at expense of others later.

“I subtly make clear that my rights and needs prevail”

Aggressive

Inappropriately honest, direct, expressive, attacking, blaming, controlling, self-enhancing at expense of others.

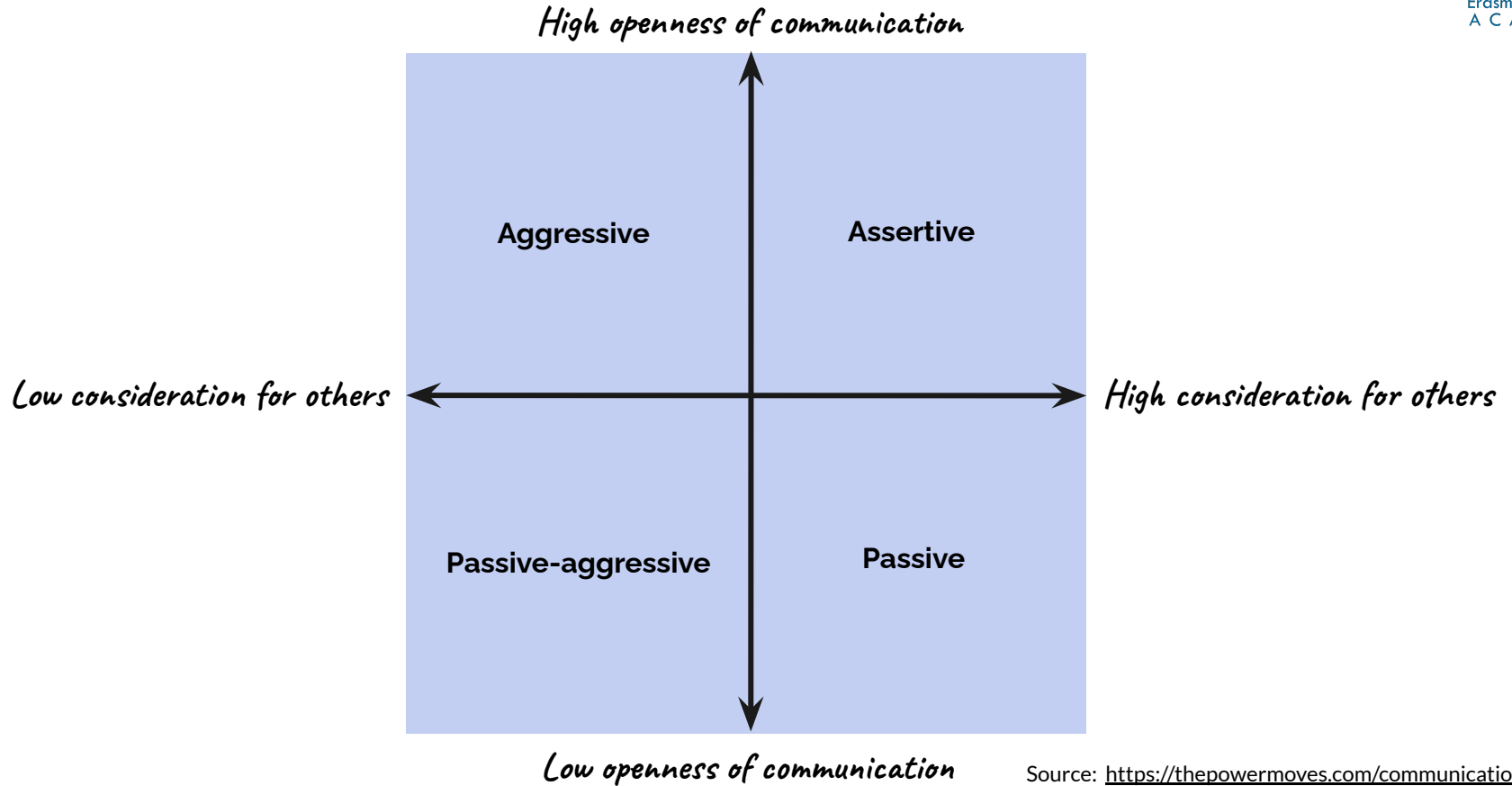
“I boldly insist that my rights and needs prevail”

Assertive

Appropriately honest, direct, self-enhancing, expressive, self-confident, empathic to emotions of all involved.

“I clearly express that we both have rights and needs”

Source: <https://thepowermoves.com/communication-styles/>



Communication styles scenarios

*Is it possible for the same situation to change based on communication style?
Let's test it!*

Activity: Role-play & Guess the style!

- **5 characters:** two teachers, two parents, and a student.
- **4 styles:** aggressive, passive, passive-aggressive, assertive

5 volunteers do the role-play while the others listen.

Activity

- Write some **typical quotes** and **behaviours** for each communication style on a sticky note and stick it on the correspondent part of the flipchart.
- Then, use those quotes to identify the main characteristics of each style.
- Finally, look at all styles and try to identify what they have in common.

Group 1: Maria Antonia, Uldis, Sophie

Group 2: Noa, Linda, Vilma, Matīss

Group 3: Isabel, Antonio, Daiva

Passive communication

- Soft voice
- Overly **agreeable**, no point of view expressed
- **Avoidance**
- **Withdrawn** body language
- Sound **unsure**
- Beat around the bush
- Sound hopeless or helpless

Examples of passive communication

“Uh...if that’s the way you want to do it...um, that’s fine with me.”

“I don’t know if I could do that.”

“I’ll talk to him soon about that problem; I’ve just been really busy.”

“I’m sorry to ask you.”

“I hate to bother you.”

“Maybe that’s a good idea.”

Passive-aggressive

- Appears to agree but really does not agree
- Tells others but not the source of the concern
- Makes subtle digs and sarcastic remarks
- Keeps score, sets conditions
- Non-verbal message contradicts the verbal message
- Holds back expressing concerns or providing assistance
- Criticizes after the fact

Examples of passive-aggressive communication

“I knew that wouldn’t work.”

“If that’s the way you want it...”

“How could you even think that?”

“When was the last time you helped me?”

“The problem with Joe is...”

Aggressive communication

- Blaming, accusing
- Intimidating body language
- Demanding, ordering
- Raised voice
- Harsh, personal language
- Verbal browbeating

Examples of aggressive communication

“You must...”

“Because I said so.”

“You idiot!”

“You always...”

“You never...”

“Who screwed this up?”

Assertive communication

- Takes responsibility
- Takes initiative
- Listens actively
- Speaks up, is direct and constructive
- Shows sincerity
- Is solution-focused
- Assumes a confident voice and body language
- Addresses concerns directly to the source
- Requests needs

Examples of assertive communication

“Yes, that was my mistake.”

“As I understand your point...”

“Let me explain why I disagree with that point.”

“Let’s define the issue and then explore some options to help resolve it.”

“Please hear me out and then work with me to resolve my concern.”

Don't mix up aggressive and assertive

Aggressive

Blunt

Harsh in tone

Blame and Browbeat

Pushes for their own way

One-way conversation flow

Assertive

Direct

Firm in tone

Collaborates on solutions

Speaks up, but listens

Two-way conversation flow

9+1 Points about assertive behaviours

- **Self-expression** – Clearly convey thoughts, emotions, rights, and boundaries.
- **Respect for others** – Acknowledge and uphold the rights of others.
- **Honesty & Clarity** – Be direct, truthful, and confident in your communication.
- **Balance & Mutual benefit** – Relationships thrive on fairness and reciprocity.
- **Verbal & Non-verbal cues** – Use both words and body language to reinforce your message.



9+1 Points about assertive behaviours

- **Context matters** – Communication depends on position, individual differences, and situations.
- **Social responsibility** – Take responsibility for your words and their impact.
- **Learnable skill** – Communication is not innate; it can be developed and improved.
- **Emotional awareness** – Express emotions constructively while respecting others.



Learn to be assertive

Learn how and when to say “no”!

In groups, brainstorm reasons why it’s difficult do it sometimes.
Try to link the reasons with your experience.

Write a list and share it in plenary.

Group 1: Maria Antonia, Linda, Daiva

Group 2: Noa, Antonio, Sophie

Group 3: Isabel, Matīss, Uldis, Vilma



Why is it difficult to say no?

- If management asks something (fear of looking unprofessional/avoidant/unable); fear to appear pessimistic; fear of negative repercussions; fear to look unpolite or egoistic; because you are a woman; wanting to be friendly; fear to disappoint; sometimes it's easier to say yes.
- To avoid conflicts; to meet expectations; hard to say no when you're under pressure and you have no time to think about a reason; fear to hurt/disappoint someone; insecurity.
- Burnout (you don't think about your feelings anymore); in public, you feel forced; if the other person is desperate; there can be consequences, especially at work; if you're too weak (lack of self-confidence); mental stress.

Why is it difficult to say no?

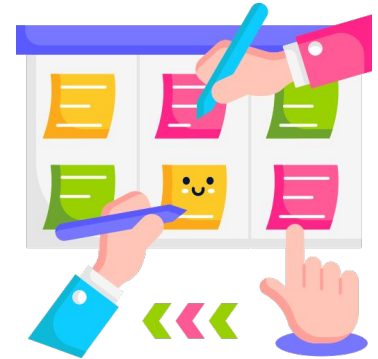
- If I say no, they may feel hurt or rejected
- If I say no this time, they may not like me anymore
- If I say no this time, they may never ask again
- They won't take any notice if I say no
- They would say 'yes' to me (and so I will feel guilty if I refuse them)
- I can't say no, because I feel sorry for them

Reflection: Think, Pair, Share

Think about a situation in your personal life or workplace in which you said **yes** when you wanted to say **no**, or you said “no” in a passive, passive-aggressive or aggressive way.

Pair up with your neighbour. Rethink about the way you handled the situation. How could you have answered in an assertive way? What would have happened if you had behaved assertively?

Share with the whole group.



How to say 'no' assertively?

- Make sure it is safe to say “No.”
- Say “No” clearly.
- Reflect the feelings of the other person. (I can see you are angry/surprised/... but... no.)
- **Stand your ground! Keep saying “No.”**
- Give your reasons *if you want to*. (There are some times when it would be to your benefit to give reasons, e.g., **to your boss; to someone you want to stay friends with;** and some times when it might not be worth the while, e.g., **when the person wants to argue about your reasons, or you don't care about staying friends with them**)
- **Don't argue about your reasons.** (“You may not agree with me, but... no.”)
- Once you said ‘no’, **don't wait to be persuaded to change your mind.** Make a definite closure by changing the subject, walking away, ...

Source: Kate Nonesuch.