

# Section 2

## Helpful Strategies

### **Body Language: Aggressive, Passive, Assertive**

In addition to expressing a feeling, body language can also communicate power over others, avoiding a problem or situation, or trying to resolve an issue. We think about these types of body language as aggressive, passive, or assertive. You will now read more about these.

#### *Aggressive*

Aggressive, nonverbal behavior might include leaning toward another person or standing too close. The aggressive person may make a fist, put hands on hips, or tightly fold his or her arms in front of the body. Facial expressions can also show aggression—clenching teeth, frowning, and so forth. The aggressive person may stare directly at someone else’s face without looking away. An aggressive person is often thought of as mean.

#### *Passive*

Unassertive or passive behavior is the opposite of aggressive action. For example, if a person is unassertive, he or she may stand back or too far away from another with a slumped posture. The person’s hands may be behind his or her back. The person may look down toward the ground instead of at the other person. The expression on the person’s face may be one of uncertainty. A passive person will likely try to avoid a problem.

#### *Assertive*

When a person acts assertively, he or she stands at a comfortable distance, makes eye contact but looks away from time to time, and shows good listening behaviors—for example, head nodding. Facial expressions are friendly. Overall, an assertive person’s actions show self-confidence. Assertive people are often thought of as competent or brave.

Your voice tone, volume, and rate of speech also give meaning to what you say. For example, if you get home late, a parent may tell you “I’m glad you’re finally home.” If he or she says this in a loud voice, slowly, and with emphasis on the word

finally, you may feel that the statement is angry. On the other hand, if the voice tone is soft and the volume is low, with emphasis on the word home, the statement may instead show relief. We'll talk about verbal body language more in the next activity.

Giving helpful suggestions about nonverbal messages during Skillstreaming role-plays will help the main actor be more aware of his or her nonverbal communication. When you use the Skillstreaming skills in real life, it is very important to think about these nonverbal ways of communicating.

## Activity 2.1—Body Language: Aggressive, Passive, Assertive

Read the following feeling words. Decide what feelings might go along with being aggressive, passive, or assertive.

Worried	Confident	Lonely	Sad
Angry	Frustrated	Confused	Anxious
Proud	Afraid	Surprised	Excited
Jealous	Hopeless	Insignificant	Contented
Offended	Left Out	Cheerful	Scared

Insert the descriptive feelings from the list above into the chart below, placing them under the most accurate description:

Aggressive	Passive	Assertive
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

## Activity 2.2—The Words We Use

Many times we can determine a passive, assertive, or aggressive manner by what is actually said. Decide if these statements are passive, aggressive, or assertive by placing a check mark under the appropriate word. Then, talk about your decisions in the large group.

Statement	Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
I don't know what to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I know that I can make a choice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You aren't worth anything.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I might make mistakes, but I am responsible for them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others don't consider my feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'll get my way no matter who I step on.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I'm sorry. I'm sorry. What did I do wrong? I'm so sorry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can't make others do something, but I can control myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can get my needs met in respectful ways.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You owe me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Activity 2.3—Feelings

Many times, how you feel impacts the choices you make. The same situation, however, does not prompt the same feeling in everyone. Some people feel sensitive to certain situations or problems that others may not. Some typical feelings include:

Afraid	Anxious	Confused	Proud
Jealous	Sad	Worried	Confident
Angry	Surprised	Excited	Lonely
Frustrated	Embarrassed	Hopeful	Determined

Read the following situations. Write what feelings this event may prompt for you. Write the feeling next to the situation. If the situation doesn't prompt any feelings, write "no feeling".

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Feeling/No Feeling</b>
You need to talk with your teacher about a project you failed.	_____
Your parent(s) accused you of leaving the kitchen a mess.	_____
A boy/girl you have liked for a while asks you to a school dance.	_____
You need to call your parent(s) and tell them you were suspended for fighting.	_____
You stayed out past your curfew.	_____
Your best friend didn't include you in an activity.	_____
In a sport, you didn't play well. Others laughed.	_____
You worked hard, and the teacher complimented you on your work.	_____
You are being repeatedly teased by a classmate.	_____
Your sister/brother borrowed your favorite sweater without asking.	_____
You are getting an "A" in a class and your classmates call you "teacher's pet".	_____
Your friends want you to steal clothes from a store.	_____