

# BEING ASSERTIVE

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## AGENDA

- SESSION 1
  - Starter
  - The Split
  - Action/Reaction
- SESSION 2
  - Review
  - More Action/Reaction
  - Pass Me the Comics, Please
  - Conclusion
- Student Assessment

### Objectives

Students will develop definitions and examples of passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors.

Students will learn how to use assertive behavior to communicate more effectively.

### Materials Needed

- Session 1: Two sheets of newspaper for each pair of students (Part I)
- Session 1: Three pages from a flip chart for students' writing (Part II)

- Session 1: Three dictionaries (Part II)
- Session 2: Three flip chart pages of notes from Session 1 (Part I)
- Session 2: One sheet of drawing paper for each student (Part I)
- Session 2: Sheet of drawing paper for each group of three - four students; colored pencils (Part III)

## SESSION 1

### Starter (3 minutes)

Read a book or a magazine as you enter your classroom. If you are already in the room as students arrive, read at your desk. Ignore all attempts by students to get your attention. Let your behavior send the message that you are totally absorbed in your reading and that you do not want to be disturbed. When everyone is seated, ask:

- Did you all feel welcomed as you came into class today? Why or why not?
- What other messages did I send to you through my behavior?
- Did anyone feel that I was being rude? Explain.

Tell students that over the next two class periods, they will explore how people communicate different messages through their behavior.

### Part I The Split (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students perform a task in order to conceptualize passive and aggressive behaviors.

#### 1. Students participate in an activity.

Have students work in pairs to perform a simple task. Give each pair of students a sheet of newspaper; then, give the following directions:

- Each of you must hold one corner of the paper. Whether you hold corners on the same or on opposite sides of the paper is up to you and your partner.
- The paper represents a pizza that you will have for lunch today (or dinner tonight). Since there are two of you, you must split the pizza between you.
- Each of you has the same goal—to tear off as much of the pizza as you can.

Tell students to begin.

#### 2. Students make observations about the activity.

Prompt volunteers to discuss the activity by asking questions such as the following:

- Raise your hand if you ended up with the larger piece. How did your partner feel about that?
- Raise your hand if you ended up with the smaller piece. How did your partner feel about that?
- What did you do during the activity to get the smaller or larger piece?

Call on volunteers to explain what they did, encouraging them to demonstrate their actions. Afterward, suggest that it might be helpful if students repeated the task to refresh their memories. Tell them to think about what they are doing as they divide the paper this time.

### **3. Students repeat the activity and observe it more closely.**

Distribute a second set of newspaper sheets to the same pairs of students and have them recreate their actions. Afterward, invite volunteers to now tell how they got either the larger or the smaller pieces. If students have attempted to change the results this time, ask for a show of hands from those who were successful. Call on a few students who raised their hands to explain what they did to change the results.

Summarize the activity by pointing out that everyone uses different behaviors to achieve goals in different situations. Sometimes, these behaviors come out in actions or words.

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## **Part II Action/Reaction (25 minutes)**

Purpose: Students work in groups to develop definitions and examples of passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors.

### **1. Students learn about different types of behavior.**

Tell students that their behavior can send different messages to people. These messages can, in turn, generate different reactions or responses. Explain to students that they are going to look at three different types of behavior, the messages they send, and the responses they are likely to get. Write the words “Types of Behavior” on the board. Tape three pages from a flip chart below this heading, and write at the tops of these pages the words “Passive,” “Aggressive,” and “Assertive.” (You will need to save these pages for use in the next session.) Ask students if they have heard these words before.

### **2. Students work in groups to develop definitions and examples.**

Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of the words. Make sure each group has either a dictionary or access to an online dictionary. Explain that the groups have two tasks:

- They must create a definition of their word that is meaningful to their group.
- They must also generate three or four examples of this kind of behavior. They may use their experiences with the activity from Part I as examples.

You might wish to time this activity, allowing about 10 minutes for students to complete group work and about five minutes for each group to share their findings, as outlined on the next page.

### **3. Students share and explore their definitions and examples.**

Ask groups to share their work with the whole class. Invite one group at a time to explain what its word means, write its word's definition in the appropriate column on the board, and give examples of the type of behavior it is defining.

After each group has presented, encourage students to ask questions, clarify information, or add examples of their own. Lead students to recognize the following:

- “Passive” means “not active; only acted upon.” Using soft or inaudible tones of voice, avoiding eye contact, slouching, and using other methods of acting or speaking that say “I can’t,” “I don’t know,” “I don’t care,” or “Don’t look at me” are all characteristics of passive behavior.
- Ask, “When someone uses passive behavior around you or toward you, how do you react?”
- “Aggressive” means “ready to start fights or quarrels; very active or bold.” Using loud or angry tones of voice, pushing into another person’s personal space, using physical or verbal intimidation, and using other methods of acting or speaking that say “Look at me,” “Listen to me,” “Do it my way,” or “Get out of my way” are all characteristics of aggressive behavior.
- Ask, “When someone uses aggressive behavior around you or toward you, how do you react?”
- “Assertive” means “clearly and positively; in a confident manner.” Using calm and steady tones of voice, maintaining eye contact, keeping a straight posture, and using other methods of acting or speaking that say “I know who I am,” “I know what I’m doing,” “I’m interested in who you are,” or “I respect you as a person” are all characteristics of assertive behavior.
- Ask, “When someone uses assertive behavior around you or toward you, how do you react?”

Encourage students to draw conclusions about each of the three types of behavior. Ask them to identify which behavior they think would send the most positive message and get the most positive response from others.

Summarize the discussion by stating that passive and aggressive behaviors are more likely than assertive behavior to lead to negative consequences or reactions from others. In general, assertive behavior is more effective.

Tell students that they will continue to work on assertive behavior in the next session. Remember to save the three pages of definitions that are posted on your board for use in the next session.

## SESSION 2

### Part I Review (8 minutes)

Tape the three flip chart pages from the last period on the board, under the heading “Types of Behavior.” Ask students to briefly recall what they did in the last class period.

Distribute pieces of drawing paper, and invite students to think about the three types of behavior they learned about. Tell students to divide their papers into three parts and make drawings that express how each of these three behaviors “looks” or “feels” to them. Suggest that they use color, images, or words to express their interpretation of each behavior.

Circulate among students as they work. When they have finished, make a few comments or observations of what you have seen. For example, you might say the following:

- The sections that represent passive behaviors are the least interesting.
- The sections that express aggression are the darkest and most off-putting.
- Those that represent assertive behavior are the most inviting and appealing.

### Part II More Action/Reaction (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students learn how to use assertive behavior to communicate more effectively.

#### 1. Students focus on assertive behavior.

Ask a volunteer to describe the activity from Part I of Session 1. (Pairs of students divided a sheet of newspaper that represented a pizza.) Ask students to think about how the activity might work if both people involved in dividing the paper used assertive behavior. Ask:

- How might the people act? (They would appear confident, speak calmly to each other, use eye contact and good posture, and be respectful of their partner.)
- How do you think the paper might be divided in the end? Why? (The paper would probably be divided fairly equally because the people involved would have negotiated equal shares, since each wanted as much as possible from the split.)

#### 2. Students identify ways to communicate assertively.

Focus attention on the flip chart pages displayed on the board. Remind students that passive and aggressive behaviors are more likely than assertive behavior to lead to negative consequences or reactions from others. Explain that assertive behavior is the best way to communicate what you want. It is the most effective way to achieve your goals.

Invite students to compile a list of tips for being assertive. Have volunteers write the suggestions in a list on the board. Although your list will include specific actions and words, it should cover the following general ideas:

- Use words that show you are responsible for what you are saying.
- Be sure that your body language and your words are sending the same message.
- Say what you want or need clearly and calmly.
- Think about what the other person wants or needs.
- Use good listening skills and ask questions.

### **Part III Pass Me the Comics, Please (25 minutes)**

Purpose: Through the creation of comics, students identify and apply different types of behavior.

#### **1. Students begin the activity.**

Divide students into groups of three or four. Ask students to name a few examples of single-frame comics. (Student responses may include *Family Circus* or *Marmaduke*.)

After groups have been formed, give the following directions:

- Each group will create three single-frame comics, one for each type of behavior we discussed.
- Draw comics showing how different characters would deal with a problem passively, aggressively, and assertively.
- Each member of the group has an equal say in what will be drawn.
- Afterward, each group will display its comics around the classroom. Students will then walk around and identify the behavior depicted in each comic.
- Before the period is over, each group will explain its comics.

#### **2. Students create their comics.**

Give groups about 15 minutes to plan and draw their comics. Suggest that they write notes as they develop each comic. They will use their notes to explain their comics to the class.

If students are in need of ideas, suggest that they review the information about the three types of behavior displayed on the board. If students seem unable to focus or move along, suggest that they keep their comics simple and to the point.

#### **3. Students display their comics.**

Ask students to hang their comics on the wall closest to where they are sitting. Have them place a piece of paper by each comic.

After all of the comics are displayed, ask students to walk around the classroom and view the drawings. Instruct students to look at each comic carefully. They should then identify the type of behavior depicted by the comic and write it on the paper.

#### **4. Students explain their comics.**

Use the remainder of the class period for groups to explain their comics to the class. Have groups retrieve the papers that they placed near each of their comics. Ask groups how many people were able to identify the behaviors depicted in their drawings. Have groups explain their comics to the rest of the class.



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**Conclusion** (2 minutes)

Ask students to explain why they are more likely to get a positive response from others when they use assertive behavior as opposed to passive or aggressive behavior. Ask students to describe passive and aggressive behaviors. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Assertive behavior is the most effective way to achieve your goals.
- Be assertive by speaking clearly, calmly, confidently, and respectfully.
- Be assertive by sending the same message both verbally and nonverbally.
- Be assertive by using good listening skills.

**Student Assessment**

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**SESSION 1**

1. Define “passive behavior.” Give an example.
2. Define “aggressive behavior.” Give an example.
3. Define “assertive behavior.” Give an example.

**SESSION 2**

1. List three ways you can demonstrate assertive behavior.
2. Why will regularly demonstrating assertive behavior, rather than passive or aggressive behavior, make it easier to achieve your goals?
3. Describe a situation in your life in which you used either passive, aggressive, or assertive behavior. Explain why you were or were not happy with the situation’s outcome and what you would do differently now.

## LESSON EXTENSIONS

### Using Quotations

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“I refused to take no for an answer.”

Ask students whether this is an example of aggressive or assertive behavior. Have them explain their thinking.

### Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

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Have each student choose a person whose contribution has somehow changed their life (e.g., an artist, historical figure, scientist, friend). Have each student create an exhibit or performance that honors their chosen person’s achievements.

Have each student write a brief biography that reveals assertive moments in their honoree’s life.

### Writing in Your Journal

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Have students write about a time when they achieved positive results by being direct and assertive. (If students haven’t had much success in this area, have them write about how they could change an existing situation by using assertive behavior.)

Have students share their experiences with a partner.

### Homework

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Have students write letters of complaint to a manufacturer regarding a faulty product, or to a government representative regarding a social issue. Remind students to make their letters assertive in tone.

Have students work with a partner to critique each other’s letters and ensure that the letters are assertive.

## Additional Resources

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Have students read *Stick Up for Yourself!* by Gershen Kaufman, Lev Raphael, and Pamela Espeland. When they are finished, discuss the role that assertiveness plays in boosting self-esteem and improving one's life.