Four communication styles

Passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and assertive.

We all use every style at times. Most of us lean on one or two, especially under stress. Only one of them respects both people.

	Passive	Aggressive	Passive-aggressive	Assertive
The message	"You matter. I do not."	"I matter. You do not."	"I will not say it, but you will know about it."	"We both matter."
Sounds like	"I do not mind." "Whatever you want." "Sorry."	"You always..." "That is ridiculous."	"Fine." Sarcasm, sulking, "forgetting".	"I would like..." "I feel..." "No, I cannot."
Looks like	Quiet voice, little eye contact, hunched	Loud, staring, pointing, in your space	Sighs, eye-rolling, the silent treatment	Steady voice, relaxed, open, direct
Short term	Avoids conflict	Gets its way	Avoids direct conflict	May feel uncomfortable
Long term	Resentment, being overlooked, low self-worth	Fear and distance in others, guilt	Mistrust, confusion, problems unsolved	Respect, clearer relationships, more needs met

Why we end up passive or aggressive

- We were taught that our needs come last, or that being nice means agreeing.
- We fear conflict, rejection or being disliked.
- We hold it in for so long that it finally bursts out.
- Nobody ever showed us another way.

Assertiveness is a skill

It is not a personality type, and it can be learned. It means saying what you think, feel and need, clearly and respectfully, while accepting that the other person may say no.

The style I use most, and with whom

A situation where I would like to be more assertive

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Saying it with "I"

A structure for raising something without starting a row.

Name _____ Date _____

Sentences that start with "You" tend to sound like accusations, and the other person gets ready to defend. Sentences that start with "I" describe your own experience, which is much harder to argue with.

When...
Describe what happened, plainly. No "always" or "never".

→

I feel...
Name the feeling. One word if you can.

→

Because...
The effect on you, or what you need.

→

I would like...
A clear, specific request.

Instead of	Try
"You never listen to me."	"When I am talking and you are on your phone, I feel unimportant. I would like us to put phones down at dinner."
"You are so selfish."	"When plans are made without me, I feel left out. I would like to be asked first."
"You always leave everything to me."	"When I do the tidying alone, I feel worn out and resentful. Could we split it?"

Watch out for

- "I feel that you..." is a "you" statement in disguise.
- Keep to one issue.
- Choose a calm moment.

Try it

What I want to say, the way it first comes out

When...	I feel...	Because...	I would like...

How it went when I said it

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