



I encourage couples to share the feelings that are often underneath the anger. You can use *I Statements* to convey these feelings in a non-blaming way to your partner.

### ***I Statements***

I feel

When you

What I would like is

**Practice these statements daily with everyone that you can.**

### **Communication Styles**

**Passive** - *I do not have a right to my feelings, thoughts, wants and needs, but others do have the right.*

Example                    I am quiet.  
                                  I don't make decisions.  
                                  I go along with others.

**Aggressive** - *I have the right to my feelings, thoughts, wants and needs, but others have no rights.*

Example                    I am loud.  
                                  I am always right.  
                                  I demand my way.

**Passive-Aggressive** - *I have no rights, and others don't either.*

Example                    I refuse to communicate.

I seek revenge in sneaky ways (hidden agenda).  
 I don't listen and don't talk.  
 I am sarcastic.

**Assertive** - *I have the right to my feelings, thoughts, wants, and needs, and others have a right to their own feelings, thoughts, wants, and needs.*

Example I state how I feel, and I listen to how you feel.  
 I make decisions, but I'm also willing to compromise.  
 I'm honest, direct, and speak openly.

**Assertiveness Exercise**

**Trigger: The supervisor criticizes you. How do you respond?**

	Passive	Aggressive	Assertive
Thoughts	<i>I can't handle this. I'd better be nice. I shouldn't say what I think.</i>	<i>I'm better than you. I'm more important than you.</i>	<i>I have rights and you do too! How should I handle this? What are my options?</i>
Emotions Feelings	I feel powerless. I feel controlled. I feel victimized. I am angry, but I will keep it in.	Anger Avoidance Frustration	I feel powerful. I feel confident. I am in control.
Behavior	I become passive. I give up. I say yes.	I become aggressive. I confront. I put my foot in my mouth.	I am firm. I hold my ground. I offer my observations and create options.
Results	I lose / You win	I Win/ You lose	I win / You win

**Benefits of Assertiveness**

I get my needs met.

My side is heard.

I don't feel angry or put down.

Being assertive is a healthy expression of my feelings.

I gain respect for myself and from others.

I feel more confident in myself.

I have control over what happens to me.

### **Why People Have Difficulty Being Assertive**

1. Fear of being disliked, rejected, or abandoned.
2. Catastrophizing: Expecting the worst of all outcomes.
3. Setting rigid requirements: Deciding to be assertive only in certain, often extreme, circumstances as *Only when I'm absolutely flat on my back will I ask for help.*
4. Devaluing self: Deciding one's needs are unimportant.
5. Unaware of options: Not realizing there are other ways to be.
6. Fearing arguing: Worrying that assertion will end in argument.
7. Being unskilled: Making unskilled inappropriate comments.
8. Playing helpless: Getting secondary rewards from being taken care of.
9. Worrying about hurting the other person.
10. Fearing one might become a bottomless well of anger: A volcano.
11. Fear of being turned down: Asking but not getting what you want.
12. Fear of getting what you want and then feeling guilty.
13. Putting out the energy to act: It is easier to be passive than change or act.

### **Assertive Bill of Rights**

To be treated with respect

To express one's own feelings and opinions

To be listened to and taken seriously

To set priorities

To ask for what one wants

To get what one pays for

To ask for information from other professionals

To make mistakes

To change one's mind

To be illogical

See image below for Gottman's Anger Iceberg.

