



Communication 101

Guide for building skills in
communicating

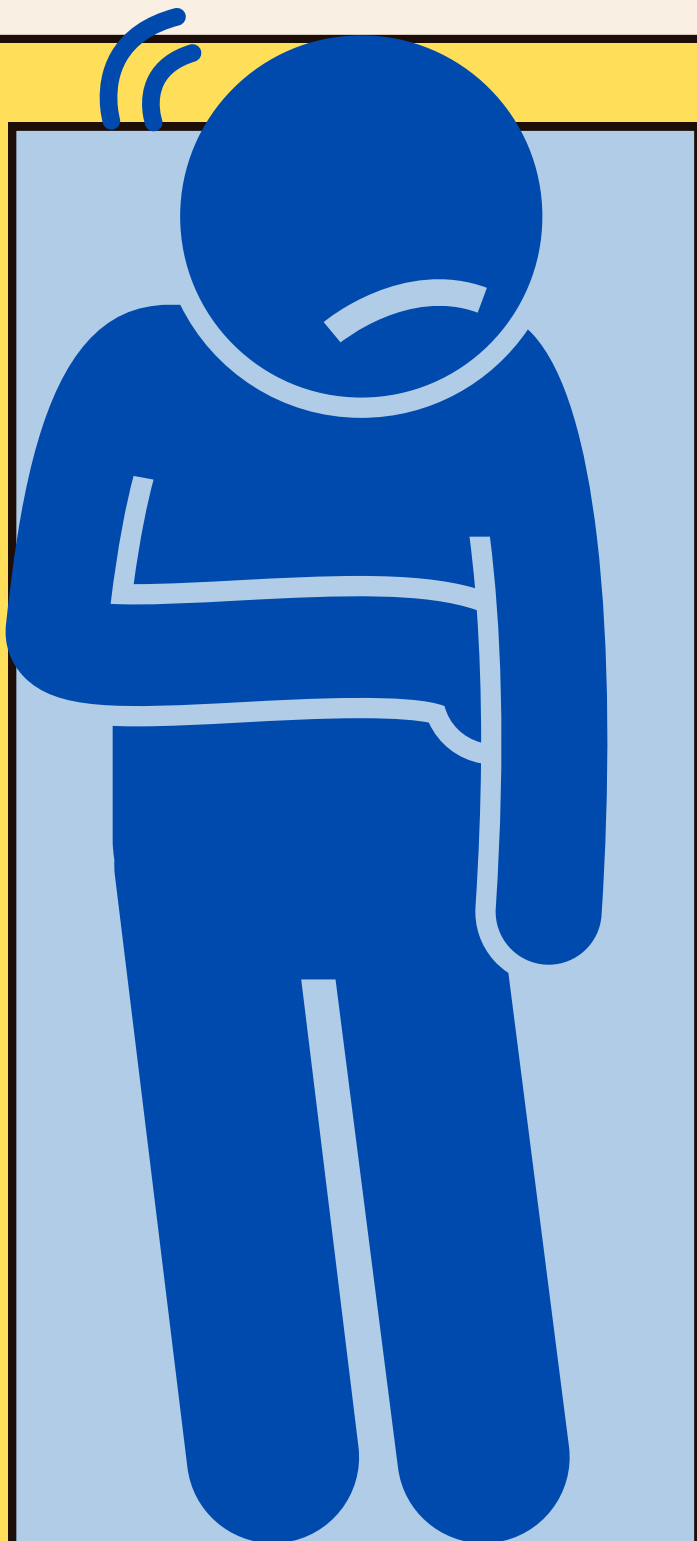
Passive Communication

What does it look and like?



Definition

- Not expressing your honest feelings, thoughts and beliefs
- Breaching your rights



Verbal

- beating-around-the bush
- frequent throat clearing
- apologising you haven't done anything wrong in a quiet voice
- fill in words, e.g., "maybe", "er" "um, "sort of"
- over-soft or over warm
- self-dismissal, e.g., "its not important", "it doesnt really matter"
- self put-downs, e.g., "I'm useless/hopeless" or "you know me..."



Body

- looking away or down
- slouched posture
- laughing when expressing anger or other emotions
- crossing arms for protection
- smiling when expressing anger or being criticised
- raising eyebrows in antipation
- covering your mouth

Cost

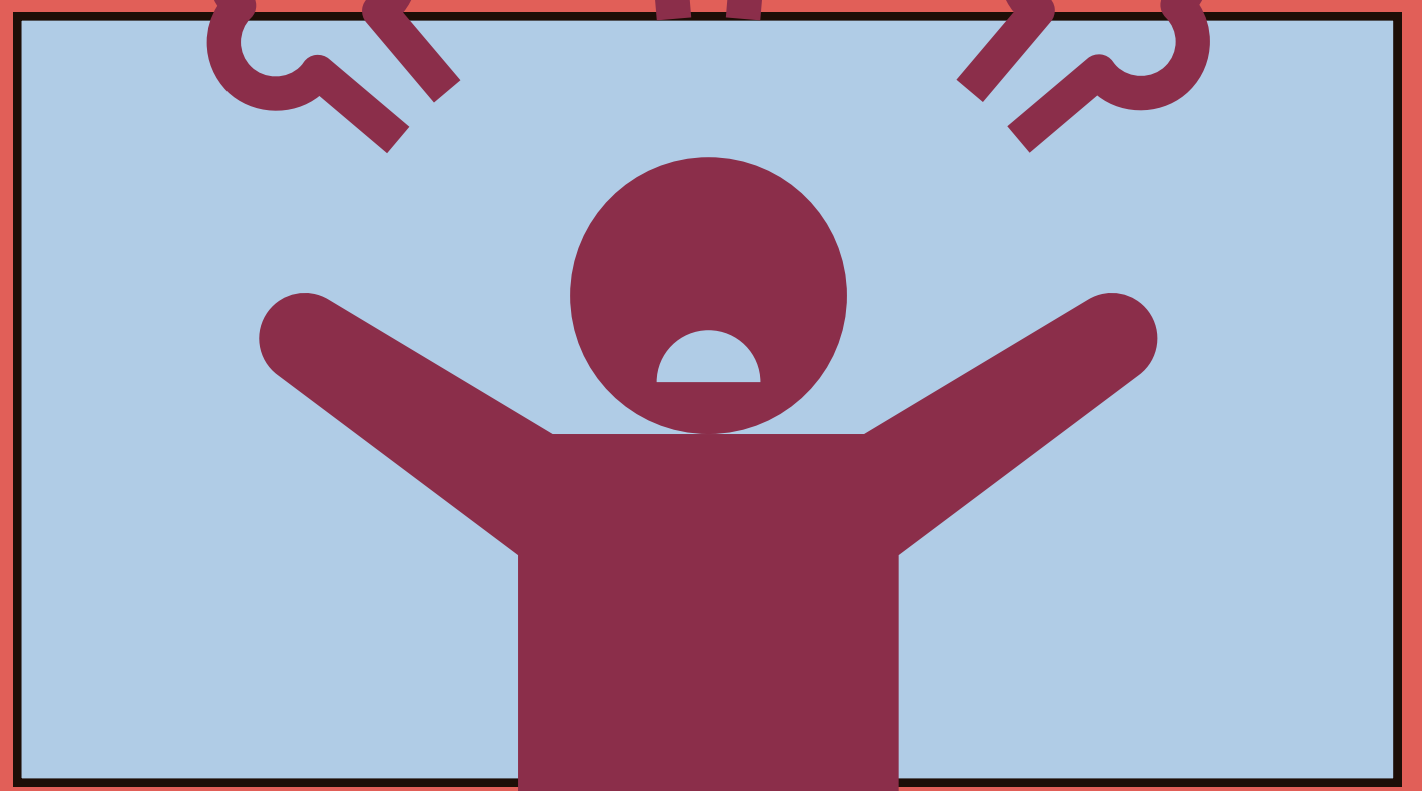
- Sometimes prone to a build up of stress and anger that explode really aggressively
- Others make unreasonable demands of you
- Can get stuck in relationships that are toxic
- Repressing anger and frustration squashes other more postive feels in you
- Loss of self-esteem
- You loose your identity and only see yourself how you think others see you

Thoughts

- "I don't matter"
- "I don't count"
- "My feelings, needs and thoughts are less important than yours"
- "People with think badly of me or not like me if I express myself"
- "If I say no then I might upset someone, and it will be my fault"

Aggressive Communication

What does it look and sound like?



Definition

- You stand up for yourself, in a way that breaches others rights
- Others usually feel devastated
- You feel powerful putting others down
- When threatened you attack

Verbal

- Using a sarcastic and condescending voice
- Speak fast and confidently, few hesitations
- Often loud, abrupt and clipped tones
- Using threats, e.g., "you'd better watch out" or "if you don't..."
- Put downs, e.g., "you've got to be kidding..." or "don't be so stupid"
- Threatening questions, e.g., "haven't you finished yet?"
- Opinions expressed as facts



Body

- Jaw clenched
- scowling and frowning
- Gestures like pointing, clenching fists and crossing arms
- Pacing around
- Leaning forwards or over
- Getting into a person's personal space
- staring at other person

Cost

- Your behaviour creates enemies and other people won't like you
- It can make you feel scared or paranoid
- If you are always trying to control others, it is difficult to relax
- Your relationships will tend to be based on negative emotions and unstable
- Aggressive people tend to feel inferior deep down
- Feelings of guilt and shame
- Decreasing self-confidence and self-esteem

Thoughts

- "I have to look out for myself first"
- "I'll get you before you get me"
- "The world is a battle ground and I am out to win!"



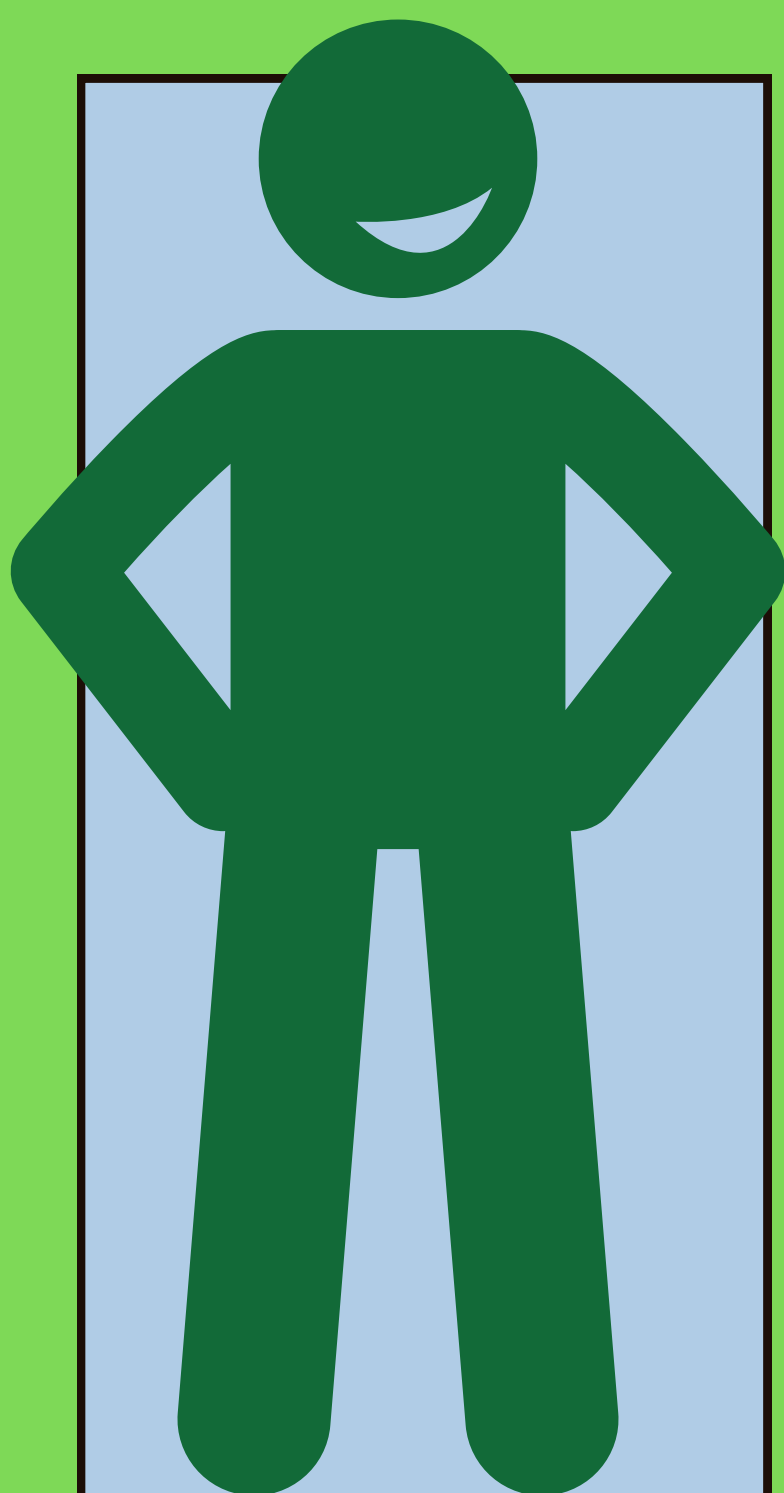
Assertive Communication

What does it look and sound like?



Definition

- A way of communicating our feelings open, honestly without breaching **your rights** OR **others**



Verbal

- Firm but relaxed voice
- Tone is in a middle range, rich and warm
- "I" statements ("I like", "I feel", "I want", "I don't like"), that are clear and to the point
- Seeking others opinions, e.g., "How does that fit in with your idea?"
- Suggestions without being bossy, e.g., "Would you like to..."
- Expressing frustration without blame; "I feel upset if you interrupt me"



Body

- Listening to others
- open hand movements
- direct eye contact without staring
- frowning with angry
- smiling when pleased
- showing emotion without aggression
- jaw and body relaxed
- balanced, open body stance

Payoffs

- The more you stand up for yourself in a respectful way, the higher your self-esteem and confidence
- your chance of getting what you want is improved
- expressing yourself at the time means resentment, stress and anger doesn't build up
- if you aren't worried about protecting yourself or being self-conscious you can see, hear and love others more easily

- "I won't allow you to take advantage of me and I won't attack you for being who you are"

Thoughts

Cost

- It is sometimes awkward and uncomfortable to express yourself
- You may need to learn lots of new skills and values and this can be scary and hard
- Others sometimes still disappoint you

How Can I learn to be more assertive in my communication?

ASSESS OTHERS

Sometimes we learn to identify others peoples behaviours much easier than our own. Practice watching other people communicating and try and figure out what communication style they have.

Talk about it with a support worker/carer.

Pay particular attention to the people you think have assertive communication styles and try and notice the best things they do and see if you can copy it!

PRACTICE

Learning to better communicate, is just like any other skill; kicking a footy, or learning maths. The best way to learn is to practice!

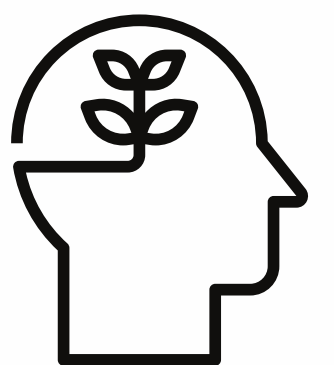
Practice with your safe people, your support workers, your therapists, your family.

Tell them how you are feeling, what you are thinking, even when it's tricky.

BE COLLABORATIVE

If the people around you know that you're trying your best to learn new skills, they can help you. They will know to practice with you, and give you gentle encouragement. They can notice when you go out of your comfort zone, and offer praise for your effort.

They can be more compassionate and kind when it's hard.



SELF-REFLECT

Think about conversations that you've had and try and decide if you were aggressive, or passive, or assertive. Notice your wins!!

Successful Verbal Communication

How can I express my feelings, thoughts and concerns verbally?

Body Language:

- Relaxed, genuine expression; smile when pleased, frown when angry
- Average volume appropriate to where you are
- Be careful of tensing your fists or jaw, crossing your arms and maintain personal space

Tips and script ideas for expressing yourself:

- Ask to have important conversations in advance so that you can both be focused and be ready:
 - *"Hey [NAME], can we please sit down and have a chat tonight?"* – then agree to a time and place.
- I want to talk about [PROBLEM]. I am feeling [EMOTION] and would really appreciate your help to work together to solve the problem.
 - *e.g., "I want to talk about the holiday coming up. I am feeling really stressed and worried about it, and would really appreciate your help to figure out a plan to help."*
 - *Really explain what your concerns and worries are, what is the problem that you need help with?*
- OR If you just want to express a thought, concern, or feeling, tell the other person that directly. If you know the reason tell them.
 - *e.g., "I thought it was important to tell you about how I've been feeling. Lately, I'm feeling lonely, and worried. I think that it might be because of all the changes that have been going on."*
- If they interrupt, or dismiss your feelings, assert your need to finish:
 - *e.g., "I'm not done speaking, can I please finish?"*
- If you have some ideas, suggest them and ask the other person what they think of that idea.
 - *e.g., "I was thinking that you introducing me when we get there might make it less stressful for me. What do you think?"*
- If you don't have any ideas, ask the other person if they have any ideas. If not, use a problem solving or coping tool.

Successful Written Communication

Prompts for written communication:

Hi [NAME],

I want to talk about/explain [TOPIC/PROBLEM].

I am feeling [EMOTION], and it is because [REASON].

I think that I might feel better if I/you [SOLUTION].

What do you think?

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

For example:

Hi Mum,

I want to talk to you about the water usage problem.

I am feeling really anxious and worried about it, because I am scared that I'll do the wrong thing and get in trouble.

I think I might feel better if we can write out some clear house rules so we are both clear about what I can and can't do.

What do you think about that?

Thanks for reading.

Ashlee