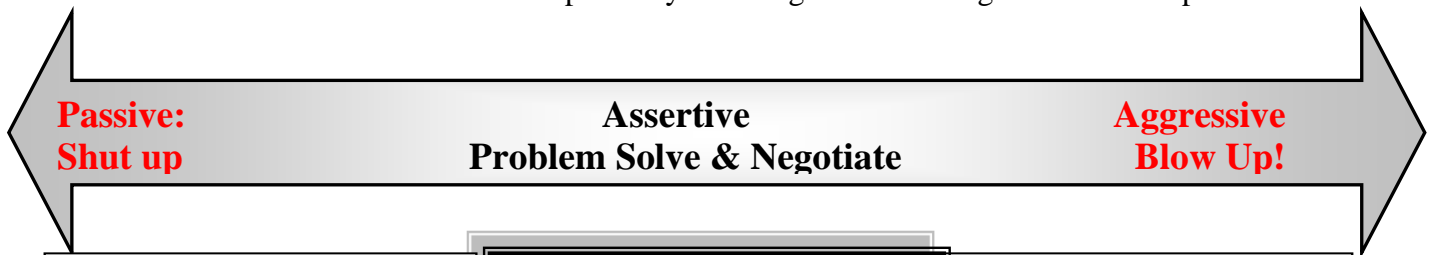


Range of Human Responses

Responses vary based on your experiences, mood, the people and the situation.

Check all items that represent your thoughts and feelings in relationships.



PASSIVE RESPONSE

- Violates self**
"I won't speak up for fear they won't like me."
- Low self-esteem**
"Others are better than me"
- Blames self and others**
"It must be my fault"
- Excessive guilt & shame**
"I'm no good, I'm a mistake."
- Dependent**
"I am a people pleaser."
- Avoids making goals**
Fears failure
- Overly responsible**
"I'm responsible for everybody."
- Learned helplessness**
"Why bother? I give up."
- Dishonest**
"Lies to avoid conflict."
- Victim**
Depression & anxiety are the expressed emotions

ASSERTIVE RESPONSE

- Honors personal rights**
"Mutual respect, mutual gains"
- Healthy self-esteem**
"We are equals."
- Acceptance/tolerance**
"Respect human dignity"
- Healthy guilt**
"Guilt triggers corrective action."
- Independent**
"I depend on myself."
- Goal directed**
Aligns thoughts & actions.
- Responsible**
(Able to choose response.)
- Flexible problem solver**
Problem solver, not fault-finder.
- Honest and truthful**
Aligns words and actions with personal values.
- Negotiator**
Experiences full range of emotions. Copes, learns and grows!

AGGRESSIVE RESPONSE

- Violates others' rights**
"How dare you have an opposing point of view!"
- Grandiose self-esteem**
"I'm better than you."
- Blames others**
"Everyone else's fault."
- No guilt/shame**
"No remorse."
- Manipulative**
Must control everything.
- Ends justify the means**
Willing to harm to get ahead.
- Under responsible**
Won't accept responsibility.
- Rigid, all or nothing thinking**
- Dishonest**
"Whatever it takes to win."
- Bully**
Anger & hostility are the expressed emotions

The chart on the previous page describes the range from passive to assertive and then to aggressive thinking. Healthy relationships demonstrate *assertive* thinking. Using the columns on the previous page, continue identifying your thought process.

Passive, Aggressive or Assertive?

“Ask yourself, “In this relationship, am I a fault finder, or a love seeker?”

Gary Chapman

Healthy relationships are assertive relationships. Identify your thoughts below.

Check each statement you are able to identify with.

Section A:



1. *“If they would just follow my advice, they wouldn’t have a problem.”*
2. *“I have to yell to get what I want. They never listen.”*
3. *“If I don’t step in and fix their problems, they will ruin their lives!”*
4. *“I’m usually right, so I insist that others listen to me.”*
5. *“I wouldn’t have to be so mean if they would not be so stupid.”*

Section P:



1. *“They make me feel like I can’t do anything right.”*
2. *“I never get to do what I want to do.”*
3. *“They manipulate and control me by making me feel guilty.”*
4. *“I can’t say what’s on my mind because I’m afraid I’ll hurt someone’s feelings.”*
5. *“I hate conflict so I just give in. It’s easier that way.”*

Scoring Section A. Thoughts endorsed in Section A are *aggressive* thoughts. These thoughts violate other people’s rights to make their own decisions and to be responsible for their own lives. Aggressive thinking leads to bullying, domineering, controlling and manipulating behavior. Aggressive thinking lacks empathy and struggles with compromise. Aggressive people will engage in scorekeeping, power struggles and may become verbally, emotionally or physically abusive. Blinded by the thought that they “are right” they often lack insight regarding their dominance. They truly believe their aggression is “for another’s own good”.

Scoring Section P. Thoughts endorsed in Section P are *passive* thoughts. Passive thinking leads to martyrdom and playing the victim. Although passive people claim to be powerless or feel used, they often attempt to gain control through inflicting guilt or expressing passive dependency. Passive people avoid taking responsibility for themselves. They feel selfish, guilty or unworthy when advocating for personal rights.

Healthy Relationships: Five Frequently Asked Questions

Question#1 “How can I stop people from using, manipulating and controlling me?”

Deb, age 54

Answer: You have no power to change other people. Remember that your power lies in your response. Being “used” or “manipulated” is a choice *you* make. No one uses or manipulates you *without your consent*. Review the “Assertive Thoughts” on pages 38-39. To avoid participating in further victimization, consider this:

Never betray yourself to gain the approval of others. Speak YOUR truth. Overcome your fear of conflict by speaking to others, as you would wish to be spoken to. When you don’t speak up because it *might cause a conflict*, understand that you are being dishonest. Don’t confuse your dishonesty with being “nice”. There is nothing “nice” about lying to people simply to avoid conflict.

“You want me to be honest with you. Unfortunately, you may not like what I have to say.”

“I understand your point, but I respectfully disagree.”

“I am sorry to disappoint you but I have to do what I think is right.”

Understand that you are responsible for your own emotions. Remember this simple fact:

You are Response Able. Able to *choose* your response.

| | | | | |
|-----------------|---|---------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Stimulus | → | Choice | → | Response |
| (Other person) | | (You decide) | | (Your thoughts, feelings and actions) |

When you feel manipulated controlled or used, consider this question: Do you truly believe that people *intentionally* manipulate, control or use you? If not, why project that intention onto them? If yes, why are you in this relationship? Remember, you have a choice.

Question#2 “How do I improve relationships when other people won’t cooperate?”

Katrina, age 27

Answer: Judging others as uncooperative may mean you are “*writing their script*”. *Writing someone’s script* refers to when you decide how you want others to think, feel, speak or behave. When they do not *follow your script*, you label *them* as uncooperative.

- ★ Accept that others have the right to an opposing view, emotion or action.
- ★ Acknowledge opposition, conflicts and incompatibilities without judgment or fear.
- ★ Focus communication on problem solving rather than blaming or complaining.
- ★ **“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”*

* *“Seek first to understand, then to be understood”* habit 5 of Stephen Covey’s *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, refers to using empathetic listening which creates an atmosphere of caring, respect and positive problem solving.

Question #3 “What is the best way to *teach someone how to treat you?*” Zack, age 33

Answer: You are already teaching people how to treat you. Your every word and interaction is a lesson. When you say, “*It’s okay, I don’t care.*”...but you REALLY DO CARE, you have taught people that you are not honest about your feelings and that you avoid conflict. This pattern may lead them to believe that they could take advantage of you in the future. Of course, when they do take advantage, you will blame them for it rather than owning your role in giving your power away. When you say, “*I didn’t tell you how I felt because I didn’t want to hurt your feelings, or because I didn’t want you to be mad at me,*” you demonstrate a need to control others’ feelings. You also blame others for your dishonesty by using their anticipated response as rational for not being truthful.

Question #4 “How do I know if I am “too sensitive?” Isabella age 22

Answer: If you are “too sensitive” you may assume remarks or statements are personal attacks. Being “too sensitive” usually refers to feeling disrespected, criticized, unappreciated, undervalued, fearful, unloved, rejected or even abandoned. **Avoid the label of being “too sensitive” by taking responsibility for your emotions.**

1. Never blame other people for how you feel. Never take responsibility for other people’s emotions. Maintain boundaries. Ask, who owns this problem? Remember, no one ever “makes” anyone feel an emotion. Every person chooses a response.

2. Use your mindfulness tool. Observe your emotional response to other people’s words and actions. Once aware, you may **choose** your response.

3. Own your intention. (Blame/complain or insight/problem solve?)

4. Do an insight reality check: Do you honestly believe the issue at hand is intended as a personal attack? Do you honestly believe someone intended to criticize, shame or upset you? If yes, why are you in the relationship? If not, why are you misrepresenting the intention?

5. Not sure of someone’s intention? Ask for clarification. Problem Solve.

“I am not sure how to take your comment, help me understand.”

“Are you upset with me or are you stressed about something else?”

“I feel like I am in a no win situation right now, what is your intention?”

“I am not sure how to take your comments. Is this about my job performance or do you have a problem with me personally?”

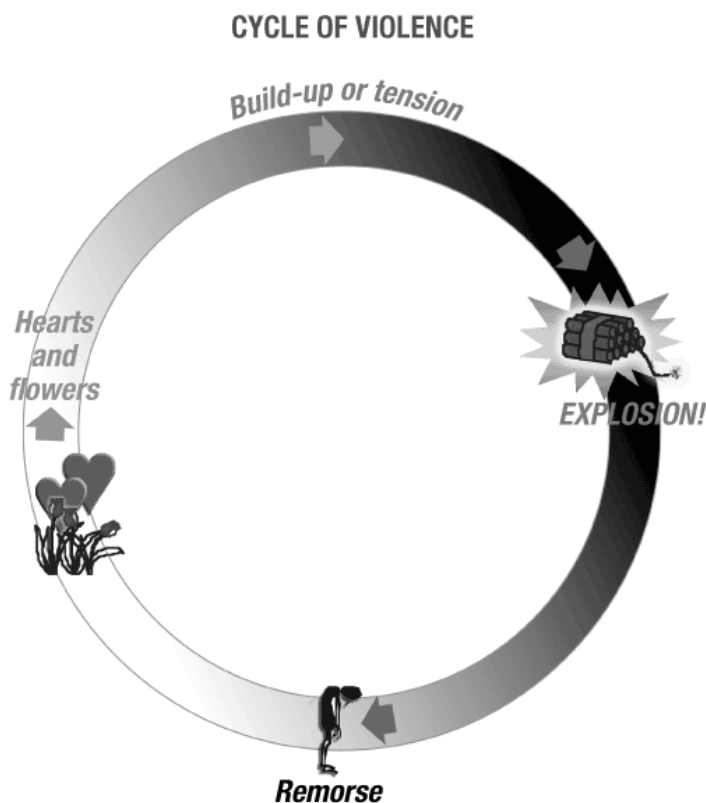
“This conversation is heading in the wrong direction; I need a few minutes to gather my thoughts.”

6. Advocate for your own safety and security if you believe someone intends to harm you verbally, physically or professionally. You are not being “too sensitive” if you confront a true villain. The following page describes additional help.

Question. #5 “Everyone tells me to end my relationship because of the lying, cheating, abuse and betrayal. But I am in love, what should I do?”
Pat, age 42

Answer. People often shop for cars with more logic than choosing relationships. If a car ran efficiently and effectively for 50% of the time but the other 50% it broke down, rolled into a ditch or burst into flames, would you place your children in that car? Would you keep driving, seek a repair shop or look for a new ride?

Relationships built on a pattern of conflict, deception or violence create emotional wounds and broken trust. The relationship described in this question is referred to as “Cycle of Violence”



developed in the 1970s by Lenore Walker to explain patterns of behavior in abusive relationships.

Each person in this relationship participates in the cycle. Each has a role. Here are typical examples:

“I know she loves me. It’s not her fault when she gets violent. I always say or do something to set her off.”

“He says he won’t cheat on me again. He only lied to protect me.”

“We only hit each other when we drink too much, so I wouldn’t call that violence.”

“He is so sorry afterwards. Each time he promises to change. He cries and begs me to stay. I don’t want to make him mad by leaving.”

Continuing to tolerate the cycle reinforces the behavior. Upon further inspection, you may begin to understand that “lying, cheating, betrayal and abuse” are not compatible with “respect, trust, loyalty and love”. Rather than asking “Do you love your partner?” ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Do I respect my partner? Do I feel respected?*
2. *Do I trust my partner? Do I feel trusted?*
3. *Do I have confidence in my partner? Do I feel confident?*
4. *Am I confident with myself as a relationship role model?*
5. *Would I want my son, daughter, sibling or best friend to be in a relationship exactly like mine?*

Breaking the cycle of violence requires learning healthier responses to stress, conflict and anger. Review chapter 2 for additional insight into the patterns of aggressive and passive personality styles. Chapter 10 will also offer more insights in “Dealing with difficult people.”

Relationships with difficult or addicted people.

You thought things would get better. You never intended to be in a dysfunctional relationship. You hoped for change. And waited. And waited. **Now you realize it is time for you to choose a healthier response** to your beloved's addictive, abusive, impulsive, inappropriate or intolerable behavior. Even though you use the tools throughout this book to improve your communication skills, demonstrate assertiveness and enforce limits, **practicing right action does not guarantee that others will respond positively to you.**

- ❖ Dysfunctional and addicted people often refuse to engage in healthier relationship rules.
- ❖ Some will ignore or even sabotage your attempt to negotiate changes.
- ❖ Some will consider your self-improvement and assertiveness as “selfish.”
- ❖ Others will react with increased hostility and may even threaten violence.



Abusers and addicts: People who are abusing mood-altering substances are not capable of consistently participating in trustworthy relationships. Their relationship with their drug of choice creates a problem much like an affair. *Refer to Week 10: Dealing with difficult people. Consider attending Alanon.*

Raging, angry people: Whether their anger is limited to intimidation and verbal threats or their rage has escalated to physical acts of assault, these personality types rarely respond positively to their beloved's assertiveness or independence. *Police protection, legal action and/or relocation may be necessary. Seek help immediately.*

Con artists and others who repetitively engage in deception or criminal activity: As with angry people, deceptive people will not “improve” as loved ones set limits or attempt to negotiate healthier relationship rules. Because conning, dishonesty and deception are main coping mechanisms for these people, *professional guidance, legal action, protection and even prosecution may be necessary.*



Personality disorders and severe mood disorders: People who suffer from severe mood disorders or personality disorders represent approximately 10% of the population*. These disorders challenge abilities to maintain loving relationships. General signs and symptoms of these disorders may include: frequent mood swings, social isolation, angry outbursts, difficulty making friends, stormy relationships, need for instant gratification or poor impulse control.

*Approximately 9.1% of adults are diagnosed with at least one personality disorder. 9.5% of adults are diagnosed with a mood disorder, 4.3% with a severe mood disorder according to July 1, 2010 statistics for The National Institute of Mental Health. (NIMH) is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-numbers-count-mental-disorders-in-america/index.sht>