

There are four different types of communication styles that people commonly use. Some of them are more effective than others in expressing your needs and wants. As you will learn, there is one communication style that is most helpful in building respectful, reciprocal, long-term relationships.

The 4 Communication Styles:

1. **Passive:** Not stating your feelings or needs. Neglecting your own rights and allowing others to ignore your rights.
2. **Passive-Aggressive:** Appearing passive or submissive outwardly but subtly acting out in an angry manner.
3. **Aggressive:** Expressing yourself in a hostile or dominant manner that attempts to control others and their responses.
4. **Assertive:** The ability to communicate in a considerate and respectful way that honors the rights, opinions, and boundaries of yourself and others.

Scenario: Sam and Jess agree to meet at the library. Sam does not call or text to let Jess know he will be an hour late. When he arrives at the library, he offhandedly says “sorry.”

Passive Communication Response:

Jess says, “That’s okay, it doesn’t matter” and looks down at the table. Jess does not state her feelings and continues to bottle up her resentment with Sam as he is almost always an hour late when they plan to get together.

Passive-Aggressive Communication Response:

Jess gives Sam the silent treatment, not responding to his apology and rolls her eyes at him, pouting while continuing to read.

Aggressive Communication Response:

Jess loudly and angrily retorts, “You’re the worst friend ever; you need to buy a watch and learn how to use it!”

Assertive Communication Response:

Jess politely asks Sam why he was late as waiting makes her very anxious and upset. She expresses that she would appreciate if he let her know when he may be late in the future. This way they can decide if planning for another time might work better for both of them.

In the examples above, the last response is the most effective and is an assertive response for Jess. She is able to explain her feelings and expectations to Sam in a calm and controlled manner. The assertive communication response expresses your feelings, needs, and wants in a confident manner that respects yourself, others, and your setting, whether at home or in public.