**Assertive, Passive, or Aggressive? Activity**

Directions:

* Read through each situation and honestly assess which behavior mostly describes you. (Feel free to give yourself an “in-between score”, for example a “2” or a “1.3”)
* Add up your score and locate the meaning below the table
* Answer the reflective questions about communication

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Situation:** | **Score= 1** | **Score = 3** | **Score = 5** |
| **When you have an opinion, you generally…** | … are afraid to speak it. | … speak your mind | … talk over people to get your point across |
| **When you are in group setting, you tend to…** | … isolate yourself | … participate | … demand control |
| **In terms of eye contact, you generally…** | … avoid it | … make good positive eye contact | … stare people down |
| **When it comes to priorities…** | … other people always come first | … you consider other people equal to yourself | … your needs and wants are the most important. |
| **If you think about your body language around other people, you generally…** | … slouch | … hold a relaxed, open posture | … cross your arms and/or enter into other people’s personal space bubble. |
| **While in conversation, you generally use language…** | … that supports other people’s arguments, even if you disagree | … that is careful in selection but assists in you getting your point across | … that may or may not hurt other people |
| **When you become hurt by someone else, you generally..** | … withdraw | … calmly explain how you became hurt | … use your words to strike the other person where they are most sensitive |

**Overall score:\***

7-17: You generally exhibit passive behavior. You tend to avoid uncomfortable situations by always agreeing with other people. This sometimes suggests that you don’t feel your opinions are worthy of recognition. It can lead to frustration from others, as you don’t ever seem to have an opinion; and it can lead to frustration from yourself, as when you don’t voice your opinion, your needs are less likely to be met. It also makes you somewhat susceptible to people taking advantage of you.

18-25: You generally exhibit assertive behavior. You are not afraid to speak your mind, but you always consider how you speak it. People will generally seek your opinion and respect your opinion, even if they do not agree with you. Assertive behavior portrays an openness that others generally enjoy being around. It is through this behavior that you are more likely to build meaningful relationships with others.

24-35: You generally exhibit aggressive behavior. You feel you need to be heard, but often forget to consider your delivery. As a result, your message, even if it’s a good one, is often lost behind other people’s feelings of discomfort. This can often lead to “false friendships”, where people are nice to you only to avoid your aggressive behavior and do not enjoy engaging you. “False friends” are not likely to be present when you are down. If your behavior is aggressive enough, you can end up isolating yourself because most people will not tolerate your behavior for very long.

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* Keep in mind that these behaviors may change, depending on the situation you may be in during the time of the behavior. For example, you may be passive in a large group setting at work, but assertive when in a small group of friends.
* It is important to consider any patterns of behavior that may be detrimental to effective communication. Being aggressive with friends and passive with coworkers does not balance out to “assertive behavior”.
* It is important to consider how others perceive you when communicating with others. If someone only sees you at work, they will most likely assume your behavior at work is the same (or similar to) your behavior outside of work.

**Reflective questions:**

1. Do you think your behaviors are vastly different, depending on who you are around? Explain.
2. Which behavior do you think is most effective for communication? Explain.
3. When it comes to hurting others, here are two situations:
   1. an individual who speaks without thinking about whether they will offend someone they are speaking to
   2. an individual who tries to avoid think about what they say, but accidentally hurts someone

What do you think the difference is?

Do you think the response from the person being hurt would be different between “a” and “b”

1. When fighting for a cause, being an advocate, what do you think is the most effective style of behavior? Explain.
2. Do you think there is a time when showing aggressive behavior can be beneficial? Why or why not?
3. Can you think of any “advocates” who you would classify as generally aggressive? How do you (or “would you”, if you don’t know any) view them?
4. What would be problematic about having a “passive” advocate?
5. Scenario: You have a union representative at work. It is time for your employer to negotiate how much you must pay for your health insurance with your union rep.
   * What could happen if your union rep displayed passive behavior?
   * What could happen if your union rep displayed assertive behavior?
   * What could happen if your union rep displayed aggressive behavior?