

Communication & Refusal Skills

Good relationships rely heavily on effective communication. Three styles of verbal communication are passive, assertive, and aggressive. A

PASSIVE communication is stating your needs, opinion, responding in a very vague way so that the person to whom you are talking is not really sure what you want or mean.

***ASSERTIVE* communication** means that the person says what they mean in a way that lets the other understand with dignity. This style of communication leaves the other person standing, feeling o.k. about them, and able to understand just what the speaker meant. In this type of communication, the speaker uses "I", does not assume or presume to know or guess about the others thoughts, motives, morals, or character. It facilitates understanding by being clear and stating up front what they want, are willing to do, what they know, where they can/ will help, etc.

AGGRESSIVE communication means communication that is very up front and usually hostile.

REFUSAL SKILLS are techniques and strategies that help you say no effectively when faced with something that you don't want to do or that goes against your values. Effective refusal skills have a 3-step process.

- Step 1 – State your position
- Step 2 – Suggest alternatives
- Step 3 – Stand your ground

Activity: Create an "I" statement in response to the following situations.

1. A fellow student wants to start to date you but you rather date their best friend.

2. At a party your friends encourage you to "hook up" with a classmate but you would rather not.

3. You no longer want to date your partner and think it is time to break up, but they still want to be together with you.

4. Your friends at a party offer you a beer but you do not want to drink. You are afraid they will mock you if you don't drink.

5. With a partner, think of a realistic scenario where you are being pressured by one or more peers to do something against your values. Write your scenario below and swap it with another set of partners. Role-play the scenario you've received using the checklist below to make sure you have included elements of assertive communication.

Checklist: Assertive Communication Skills	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	"I" messages
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Respectful but firm tone of voice
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alternatives to the action
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Clear, simple statements
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate body language

Reflection: How can being assertive help protect your physical, emotional/mental, and social health?