

Using different communication styles  
in the workplace

**ENABLE**



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# Welcome!

## Your facilitator for today is



An orange speech bubble with a white outline, containing the text: "What words come to mind when you think of these communication styles?"

What words come to mind when you think of these communication styles?

- Assertive.
- Aggressive.
- Passive-aggressive.
- Submissive.
- Manipulative.

- Write your answers on Post-it Notes and stick on the board.

# Aims of the session

1. Define different styles of communication.
2. Identify when each may be used.
3. Discuss traits of each.
4. Find out how to make the most of the positive styles.



# Sorting activity

In groups, try to match up your cards.

You will have matched together a communication style, its definition and some examples.



Style	Definition	Examples
Assertive	Generally, the style least used by people, but considered one of the most effective. You need to have high self-esteem to communicate in this way. You communicate your own needs whilst still being aware of those of others.	<p>“I will need the report by Friday. Can you make sure it is ready on time.”</p> <p>“I won’t be able to take on the additional duties as they would affect my ability to finish the Colson project.”</p>
Aggressive	The easiest style to recognise. It utilises instructions, demands, control and domination. You are focused on winning when you use this style. Considered one of the least effective styles as the message is often lost during reaction.	<p>“Stop talking rubbish!”</p> <p>“I’ve got more experience than you, so you need to do what I say.”</p> <p>“Get it done now!”</p>
Passive-aggressive	This style is typified by a lack of direct confrontation whilst complaining or acting resentfully inwardly or with others not directly involved. Often makes more use of body language to convey their true thoughts. May appear to be giving others what they want outwardly.	<p>“You should do it as I’m not good enough and you always know best.”</p> <p>“It’s fine.”</p> <p>“I’ll go and sort out those customers. It always seems to be my turn.”</p>
Submissive	This style focuses on putting others first and not expressing their own needs. There may be a general lack of any type of communication from this type of person. This person will always give in to other’s demands and wants.	<p>“You decide. I don’t mind.”</p> <p>“You all go, and I’ll finish the work.”</p> <p>“I’ll go with whatever everyone else wants.”</p>
Manipulative	People using this style are skilled at influencing and controlling others. Their aim is to get what they want without doing so in a direct way. They are skilled at verbal communication and may convey subtle messages or tones that may not be picked up on by the receiver.	<p>“If you had given me better instructions, I would have done a better job.”</p> <p>“You always get so emotional about everything. Why don’t I handle these tasks in the future?”</p> <p>“It’s a good idea, but are you sure you should show it to the management committee?”</p>

# Submissive style traits

- Always apologising.
- Do not make decisions.
- Avoid saying what they want.
- Hard to know their feelings.
- May blame others for problems.
- Usually are very quiet and speak rarely.
- Use submissive body language – lack of eye contact, looking down, sitting rather than standing, never at the front.

# Aggressive style traits

- Often loud and possibly threatening.
- Continuous eye contact.
- Make themselves seem larger – stand over others, take the highest position, take over other's personal space.
- Very critical of others.
- Make large bold gestures.
- Speak over others.



# Passive- aggressive style traits

- Facial expressions and body language don't match how they feel.
  - Body language usually shows the real feelings.
- Know what they want, but don't put it into words.
- May undermine or gossip about others behind their back.
- May agree to cooperate on something but then not go through with it.
- Speak patronisingly and use sarcasm.

# Manipulative style traits

- Speak patronisingly and possibly in a high pitched voice.
- Make others feel sorry for them.
- Don't directly say what they want.
- May sulk.
- Very cunning and controlling.
- Put doubt in people's minds about their own value.



# Assertive style traits

- Aware of their own rights and those of others.
- Can express their emotions and needs clearly.
- Use open body language and gestures.
- Ask for what they need.
- Aim for everyone to get what they want if possible.
- Use 'I' rather than blaming using 'you'.



To be a better communicator, you need to use more of the assertive traits and minimise traits from the other categories.

# Becoming more assertive

If you can become more assertive at work, then you will achieve your goals and it will help you progress within the workplace.



# Minimising submissive and passive traits

- Many people don't realise that being passive can be disruptive and slow things down in the workplace.
- People can feel frustrated or annoyed at the lack of decision making skills.
- Being passive/submissive drains the energy from a situation.
- People may give up trying to ask your opinion or communicating with you altogether.



# Working with Manipulators

- Manipulators often do well in the workplace because they get things done, so you have to manage them carefully.
- Don't be drawn into gossip or implied actions. If you think they want you to do something, make them spell it out.
- Where possible, stop gossip or nasty remarks about others rather than listening to them.
- Talk to them directly about any problems or issues.

# Spin the wheel!

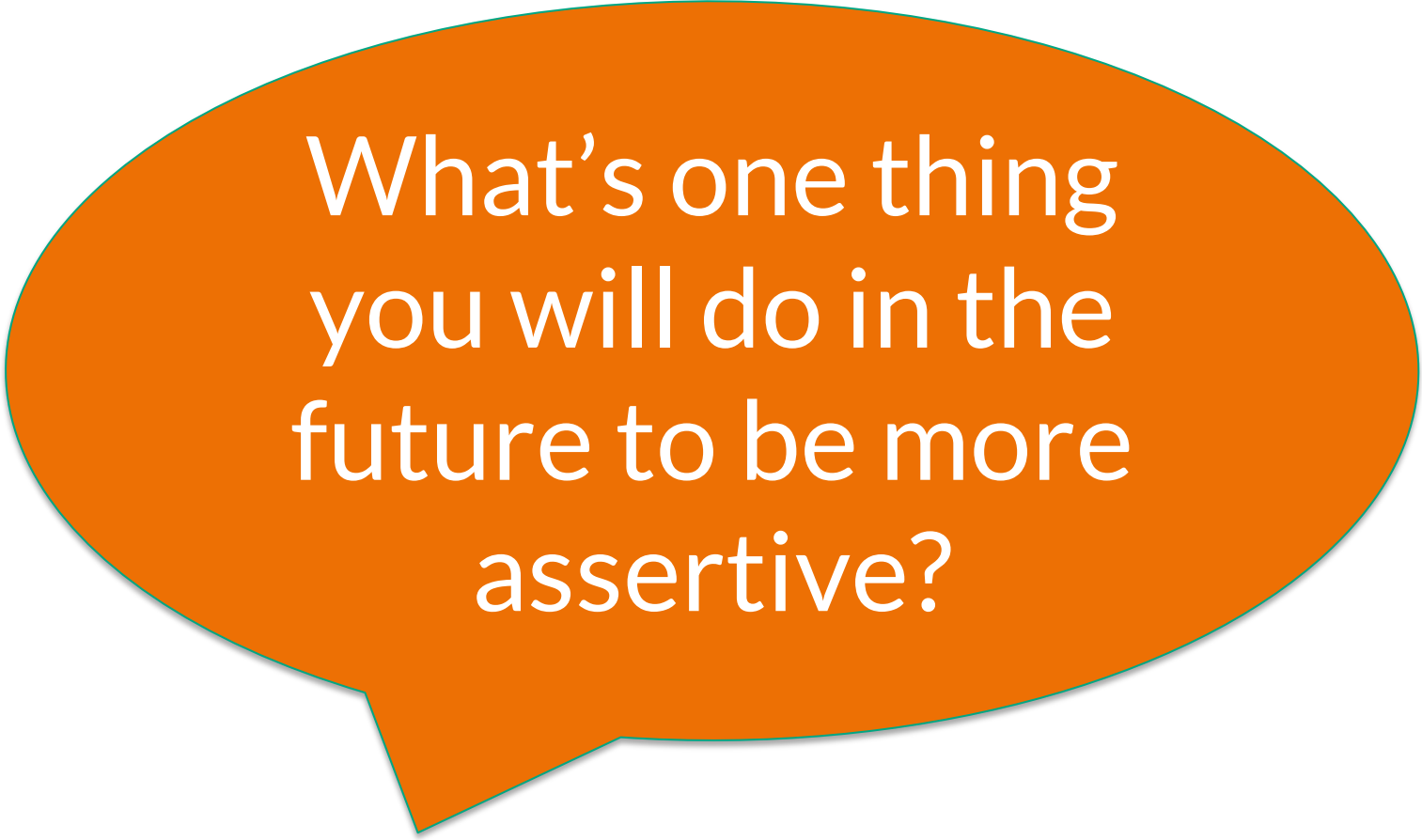
- Work in pairs.
- Split your paper into two and label the sides DO and DON'T.
- Spin the wheel to see some workplace scenarios.
- Consider how you might show assertive behaviour in each scenario – write these ideas on the DO side.
- Consider how you might avoid showing passive-aggressive, submissive or manipulative behaviour – write these ideas on the DON'T side.
- Share some ideas with the group.



# Did we achieve our aims?

1. Define different styles of communication.
2. Identify when each may be used.
3. Discuss traits of each.
4. Find out how to make the most of the positive styles.





What's one thing  
you will do in the  
future to be more  
assertive?

# Thank you!

