

Key Points

People who have experienced abuse and trauma, sometimes have difficulty with effective communication.

What they might have seen as a child (which tends to be where we learn this), might have been difficult and survivors often have poor self-esteem (as we have seen) which means they feel they want to make themselves seem ok to others by putting others first, or want to protect themselves from others by being aggressive.

Effective communication is about being able to understand and express what it is you need while also being able to take into account the impact this will have on other people. Communication gets difficult when it is:

- **Aggressive:** Your focus tends to be on protecting yourself and you pay little attention to the relationship or the impact on the other person
- **Passive:** Your focus tends to be on protecting your relationships, and you pay little attention to the impact of this on yourself.

We are aiming for assertive, which is about trying to find a balance where both you and the person you are communicating with are worthwhile.

Complete the communication quiz and see what this tells you about your current style of communication. It can also be interesting to complete this, thinking about some key

people that you communicate with. What is their style? What is the impact of this?

Changing communication patterns takes preparation, practice and patience.

However, if you are experiencing domestic abuse or an unsafe relationship, please get safe before you change your communication pattern as this could increase your risk.

Communicating effectively is generally called assertive communication.

Think about body language:

- Avoid slouching, backing away, covering your mouth
- Avoid leaning over someone, getting in their space, pointing
- Hold yourself straight (but relaxed)

Think about eye contact:

- Avoid looking down or looking away
- Avoid starting someone down
- Try to give firm eye contact without staring

Think about the way you speak:

- Avoid being hesitant, pausing, speaking softly, letting your voice trail away
- Avoid speaking curtly, sarcastically or shouting
- Try to have an even steady pace, be sincere, clear and with good volume

Think about what you say:

- Be specific and direct
- Stick to your statement, repeat if necessary
- Don't apologise (unless you have actually done something wrong)
- Don't put yourself down 'I am so stupid...'
- Ask other people's opinions
- Don't threaten or blame
- Be prepared to compromise. You can't always get it all your own way.
- Be honest
- Accept compliments
- Give compliments
- Accept constructive criticism
- Give constructive criticism
- Be clear

| My effective communication plan

What I want to achieve and what this would change in my life:

I will prepare by:

I will practice:

I will be patient by:

Looking back and looking forward: This course is likely to be part of a journey, please discuss with your facilitators or your link person what you would need now.

What I have learned from the course:

What I still need (e.g. move to phase 2 to tell my story, more practice, help with substance misuse):

- **Remember to make changes using the 3 Ps**
- **Remember to be compassionate**
- **Remember that you are not responsible for what other people have done to you**
- **Remember to stay safe**
- **Remember you are incredible**