

Identifying Your Personal Style of Communication

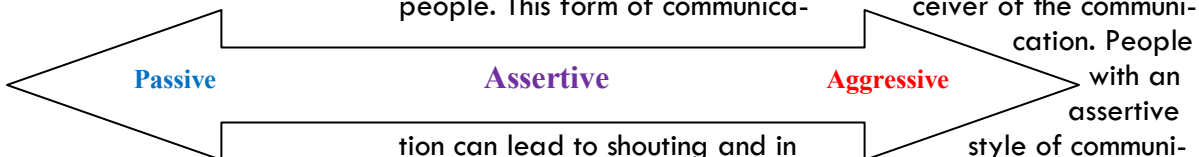
With the holiday season upon us, family gatherings, work parties, and other social events are undoubtedly filling up our schedules. Many of us are spending time with a variety of people, and definitely some with whom we may struggle to communicate with. Identifying your own personal style of communication may help in navigating both personal and professional relationships.

come a problem because this can send a message that their thoughts, feelings, and needs are not as important as others'. People who are passive also tend to put others' needs before their own and are sometimes described as "people pleasers."

someone who communicates passive-aggressively often has difficulty being direct about his or her thoughts and feelings. They sometimes use manipulation to get what they want, without it looking like manipulation.

Aggressive communication often looks like bullying. Those who use this style of communication often disregard the rights of others and force their own needs and opinions onto other people. This form of communication

Assertive communication, on the other hand, is the healthiest way in which to communicate with others. It is healthy both for the person communicating and the receiver of the communication. People



Communication is often broken down into four broad categories: passive, aggressive, assertive, and passive-aggressive. However, it is sometimes difficult to know the difference between such terms as assertive and aggressive because they are easily confused.

You might think of passive as being one extreme, and aggressive being another extreme, with assertiveness being the "happy medium." People who use a passive communication style often come across as easy going or shy. They also usually go along with others' ideas and try to avoid conflict. However, this can be-

tion can lead to shouting and in some cases, physical aggression. Using an aggressive style of communication can risk damaging relationships and others' self-esteem.

Passive-aggressive is a term that is often used to describe a style of communication that combines elements of both passive and aggressive styles. In this style of communicating, a person may use passive means of communicating that have an aggressive result. For example, this might occur when a person says, "yes," but he or she means "no." "Guilt trips" can also be a way of communicating in a passive-aggressive way. In other words,

style of communicating are able to express their thoughts and feelings clearly, but do so respectfully. They consider and value their own needs, but also the needs of others. This form of communicating can help to build strong, balanced, and respectful relationships with others.

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION IS THE HEALTHIEST WAY IN WHICH TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS.

How Do I Know My Style of Communication?

Refer to the communication quiz on page 3.

Holly A. TenBrink, M.A.

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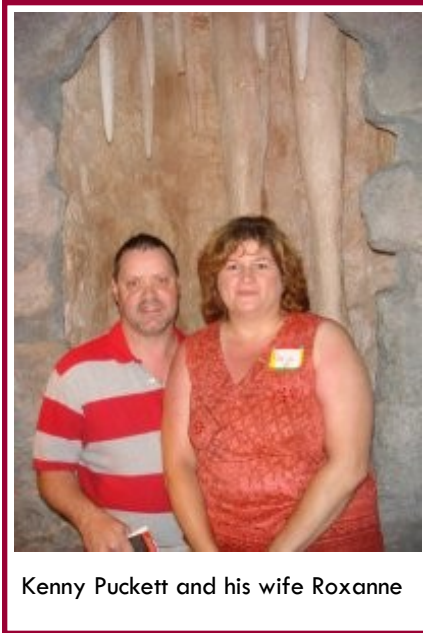
Monthly Guidance

Dear MG,
I really miss my friend Kenny Puckett!
Where did he go and how is he doing?

Sincerely,
Missing Kenny

Dear Missing Kenny,

Believe it or not, you are one of many questioning Kenny's whereabouts! As Ball State University's previous Practicum Clinic Coordinator, Kenny brought cheer and warmth to all those that interacted with him. Unfortunately, he left work during the summer of 2009 to fight colon cancer. Kenny has been unable to return to work and is not likely to return in the near future. He has been receiving chemotherapy throughout the



Kenny Puckett and his wife Roxanne

fall in an attempt to shrink the tumor and remove it. Thankfully, this week he received good news that the colon tumor can possibly be re-

moved which makes it possible to repair the colostomy!

If you know Kenny, you know his vibrant spirit! He has retained that fighting character that's always been a part of the man we know and love. He's looking forward to a time when he feels well enough to come in and

volunteer. Meanwhile, the Practicum Clinic is intently grateful to Maggie Orr for step-

ping in and filling in Kenny's large shoes.

To help support Kenny and his family, the clinic has set up a college fund for his children. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the clinic at 765-285-8047.

Monthly Guidance [MG] is here to answer questions about relationships and personal issues. If you would like to ask MG a question, you may call the Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic and leave an anonymous message for MG. Or, you may send your question in writing to the address on the back page of this newsletter. If you choose to ask MG a question, the identity of the person submitting the question will remain completely anonymous. Please keep in mind when writing your questions that space is limited. Due to time constraints, MG cannot answer all questions, but will try to choose questions that are representative of a broad range of issues. If your question does not get answered and you would like to discuss it, please call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047. Please be advised that MG is neither a crisis/emergency service nor a correspondence therapy service. If you need either immediate attention or ongoing therapy, call Ball State Counseling Practicum Clinic at (765) 285-8047.

Language Development Tips

By Ashley Hutchison, MA

Talking to kids is easy for some adults and like a foreign language to others. Children may communicate differently depending on their stage of development. We'll review some descriptions of how children communicate at different ages and ways you can help them grow and learn.

Newborns communicate mostly by crying. Babies are able to recognize and be comforted by the voices of their caregivers. Paying attention to the different types of cries from your baby can help you determine what the need be it food, a diaper change or sleep:

- **Talk to your newborn whenever you can. A familiar voice can be soothing.**
- **Give them physical affection, such as gentle kisses.**
- **Respond to babies' cries – they usually mean something.**

Recognizable language development begins when children are 1-2 years old, starting with first words and ending in phrases and maybe even short sentences. Children this age understand much of what's said to them. By age 2 toddlers like the word "no" and "mine." They use these words to begin to assert their independence. You can help by:

- **Talking to the child using correct grammar rather than "baby" words.**
- **Speak slowly, using simple phrases and commands.**
- **Toddlers may still be communicating using gestures (such as pointing), but continue a running commentary and wait for a response.**
- **Resist the urge to correct a child's pronunciation. Rather, correct the pronunciation in your own response.**

By 2-3 years, most children can follow simple directions and use anywhere between 50-200 words. Some children even learn concepts such as age and counting. You can help by:

- **Talking to the toddler about their day.**
- **Play make believe games.**
- **Read books and encourage "pretend" reading.**
- **Sing and play word games.**

Language in 4-5 year olds becomes more sophisticated. They can follow directions and eagerly talk about themselves. They speak more clearly and can use up to 8 word sentences and speak more clearly. Here's what you can do to help:

- **Keep reading materials readily available for kids to pick up.**
- **Talk with the child about specific**

books or movies you watch together.

- **Model an enjoyment of reading by reading books yourself.**

As children transition to school age (6-12 years) their independence and interaction with peers increases. Their language skills grow rapidly. They can express complex ideas and opinions using clear speech. You can help by:

- **Set aside time each day to talk about the child's daily activities and actively listen to the child.**
- **It is important to remember to talk along with the child, not at them.**

- **Ask open ended questions, rather than "no/yes" questions to prompt more conversation.**



Adolescents, usually 12-18 year olds, spend more time away from home and with peers. Teens communication abilities are similar to adults. Thoughts may be more abstract and include moral issues. Keeping open communication with

your teen is the single best way to insure healthy development and good choices. You can help by using the same suggestions provided above and exploring more complex ideas in a non-judgmental way.

Healthy language development helps kids function in the world around them. Using these tips to actively engage them promotes a productive set of language skills they can use for the rest of their lives.

Communication Style Quiz

For each option below, place a check mark next to the descriptors that describe your style of communicating MOST of the time with MOST people (there will always be exceptions, but think about what is most common for you).

Section 1:

- You allow others to choose and make decisions for you.
- You are emotionally dishonest.
- You are indirect and self-denying.
- You are inhibited.
- If you get your own way, it is only by chance or luck.
- You feel anxious, ignored, helpless, manipulated, and angry at yourself.
- Others view you in interactions as a "pushover."
- Others accuse you of not knowing what you want or how you stand on an issue.
- One of your underlying beliefs is that you should never make someone uncomfortable or displeased, except yourself.
- You have been described as a "people pleaser."

Section 2:

- You choose and make decisions for others.
- You are brutally honest.
- You are direct and forceful.
- You are self enhancing and derogatory.
- You'll participate in a win-lose situation only if you'll win.
- You demand your own way.
- You often feel superior, righteous, or controlling.
- Others feel humiliated, defensive, resentful, and hurt around you.
- The outcome when interacting with others is usually that your goal is achieved. Your rights are upheld, but others' are violated.
- Your underlying belief system is that you have to put others down to protect yourself.

Section 3:

- You manipulate others to choose your way.
- You tend towards being indirect, but often come across as being direct.
- You are self-enhancing, but not straightforward about it.
- In win-lose situations, you will make the opponent look bad or manipulate it so that you win.
- If you don't get your way, you'll make snide comments or pout and be the victim.
- You might feel confused, unclear on how you feel, and angry about being uncertain.
- Others feel confused, frustrated, and not sure who you are or what to expect next from you.
- Others feel that they need to protect themselves from being manipulated by you.
- One of your underlying beliefs is that you need to fight to be heard and respected. If that means you need to manipulate, be passive or aggressive, so be it.
- You often use guilt or shame to get others to do what you want.

Results:

After you have read through the descriptions, look back through each section and determine in which you have the most checkmarks. It is possible to have a combination of communication styles from more than one section.

- 1st Section:** You use mostly a passive style of communicating.
- 2nd Section:** You use mostly an aggressive style of communicating.
- 3rd Section:** You use mostly a passive-aggressive style of communicating.
- 4th Section:** You use mostly an assertive style of communicating.

What can you do to become more assertive in your style of communicating?

Most of us could be more assertive at least with some people of some of the time. First, you can read over the descriptions of assertiveness in Section 4 and see if there are areas of your life in which you can apply these components of communicating. Remember that communicating your feelings is also important in being assertive. The following "fill in the blank" formula might help to improve your communication with those you care about.

I FEEL (name the feeling; Examples: mad, sad, frustrated, etc.).

WHEN YOU (name the behavior; Examples: ignore me, don't clean up, etc.).

BECAUSE (name the reason: Example: I try not to treat you that way.).

AND I WISH THAT YOU (name what you would like them to do instead; Examples: Use a different tone of voice, Help with cleaning up).

An example of using this formula would be:

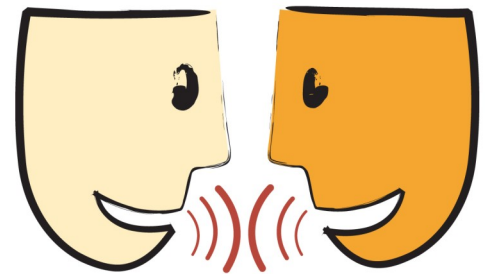
I FEEL frustrated WHEN YOU reject my ideas BECAUSE I try not to treat you that way, AND I WISH THAT YOU would sit down with me so that we can discuss finding a common solution.

Here is a blank one for you try:

I FEEL _____ WHEN YOU _____ BE-
CAUSE _____ AND I WISH THAT YOU _____.

Section 4:

- You choose and make decisions for yourself.
- You are sensitive and caring when you are honest with others.
- You are direct and say what you mean to others.
- You are self-respecting, self-expressive, and straightforward.
- You try to convert win-lose situations to win-win situations.
- You are willing to compromise and negotiate fairly.
- Others around you feel valued and respected in interactions with you.
- Others understand where you stand on issues.
- You respect your own rights as well as the rights of others.
- You can respect others even if you do not necessarily approve of their behavior.



Featured Counselor Profile

Eric B. Lester, M.A.

By Mona Ghosheh, MEd
With Eric Lester, MA

This column is a way for the community to learn about the diverse talents of students, both master's and doctoral, employed at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic.

Eric B. Lester is studying to receive his PhD in Counseling Psychology from the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services. He is currently seeing clients at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic while also working with clients seeking weight loss surgery at the Clarian Bariatric Center and providing supportive counseling services to patients at the Ball Memorial Hospital Cancer Center. The following is a discussion with Eric, one of many talented individuals employed at the Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic.

How did you decide to pursue your PhD in Counseling Psychology?

When I was in college, I became very interested in psychology, the study of human behavior, and why we act the way we do. I knew then that I wanted to pursue a career in psychology but I did not know exactly what I wanted to do within the field of psychology. I was fortunate to have several positive learning experiences after graduating from college to guide my path. After these experiences, I knew that health psychology was a specialty I enjoyed and wanted to pursue for a career. I then set out to decide on the best course to become a health psychologist. For me, that was to pursue a PhD in Counseling Psychology. The values of counseling psychology and my personal values are very similar. This similarity made the decision to pursue a PhD in Counseling

Psychology easy for me.

What are your clinical interests?

My main clinical interests involve recovery after weight loss surgery and the ways in which people's lifestyles change. In particular, I am interested in how lifestyle changes increase their chance of success in losing weight, keeping it off, and improving quality of life. I am also interested in the effect health problems have on quality of life. I question how

"THE VALUES OF COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY AND MY PERSONAL VALUES ARE VERY SIMILAR."

quality of life can be improved despite having health problems. Above all, my clinical interests involve how psychology can help individuals make the transitions in life that are required after weight loss surgery.

Are you currently doing any research?

Yes. I am currently working with another PhD student, Tricia Groff, on some research. We are looking at the effect of self-valuing on the psychological aspects of weight loss surgery. We are curious about what counseling psychologists can do to help improve the patient's experience of recovery and adjustment after the surgery. I am also in the process of developing a research project that will try to figure out how people come to decide what eating behaviors to choose after weight loss surgery.

What has been your most influential (or exciting, or enjoyable) work experience?

My most influential work experience is working at the Clarian Bariatric Center. At the bariatric center, I have had the opportunity to indulge in my passion. There, I worked with people who had to make lifestyle changes so that they could have a successful surgery.

Perhaps the most exciting work I have done is not at a particular place but in a specific outcome of my work with many clients. I get excited when individuals are seeing how changes in their lives help them to feel better and improve their quality of life.

Are there any populations that you especially enjoy working with in counseling?

I do not think I have a "favorite" population. I typically work with adults that have health concerns in addition to their mental health concerns. I guess that would mean that I especially enjoy working with adults who have health concerns that affect their mental health.

What do you hope to do after you graduate?

After graduation, I hope to work in a community hospital in a number of roles including bariatrics, cancer services, and lifestyle change. I would like to help patients adjust to an illness and recover from illness while they increase their quality of life.



Eric Lester, third-year doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services

Featured Mental Health Issue:

Communicating With Persons With Autism Spectrum Disorders

By John M. McConnell, MA
Courtney M. Ryan, MA

If you have experienced being around persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), then you already know that talking with them can sometimes be a difficult task. Persons with ASD have trouble with using verbal and non-verbal communication. In everyday communication, persons with ASD are often described as being "off in their own world" because many times they are not interested in what others may have to say. They often have their own activities they enjoy and get upset when others get in the way of their plans. Interacting with persons with ASD can be stressful. Yet, understanding some basic facts about ASD can help and make it a more enjoyable activity for all.

Why is communicating with persons with ASD so difficult?

Lynn Vittetau, who has worked with persons with ASD for much of her adult life said, "It can be difficult for them to understand what you are saying to them." Some persons may understand what you are saying, but have a difficult time responding to you and may get frustrated. Becky Colser, who also has mentored persons with ASD, believes that one of the most difficult parts of communicating with persons with ASD can be understanding

their emotions. Cosler said, "In general, most persons with ASD have trouble communicating what they are feeling. They have difficulty expressing all of their emotions and it comes out many times in anger and frustration." Often, persons with ASD can be frustrating or overwhelming because they are sometimes very repetitive, loud, and disruptive.

- 1/3 to 1/2 of individuals with autism do not develop enough natural speech to be able to communicate.
- Individuals with autism are often less interested in sharing their experiences with others
- May have difficulty understanding figures of speech
- May feel uncomfortable in new social situations
- May avoid making eye contact
- Children with autism tend to verbalize fewer requests than adults without autism
- May not be able to engage in pretend play
- Sometimes repeat back what others have said

What is most helpful when trying to communicate?

Just because a person may be non-verbal does not mean that they cannot understand you. Also, being non-verbal

does not mean they are not smart or cannot communicate with you in other ways. For persons who do not develop speech, "many times they can use sound boards with pictures, simple words, letters, and other symbols. You can even use music," said Cosler. Vittetau said, "Everyone is different. There are no 'textbook cases.' After you get to know the person you will get better at understanding what they are trying to say to you." When you are trying to speak to persons with ASD it is helpful to remember to give them simple choices. For instance, do not say, "What is your favorite color?" Instead, suggest 'Blue or Green, then Red or White?' Both Cosler and Vittetau remind us to be patient and positive when working with persons with ASD. If some behavior is upsetting you then simply state, 'Please do this,' rather than saying 'Don't do that!!!' Also, when speaking to persons with Autism, try to use concrete language rather than abstract sayings. For example, saying 'Are there butterflies in your stomach' would better be stated as, "Are you feeling nervous?" Finally, don't be afraid to check in with them to see if they understood you by having them repeat what you said.

In summary, keep in mind that communication can take on many different forms. It can look different from person to person. Communicating with persons with ASD can be made easier by keeping things clear and simple. It also helps to always keep working toward understanding the other person's point of view. Be creative and try new things in finding ways to understand one other.

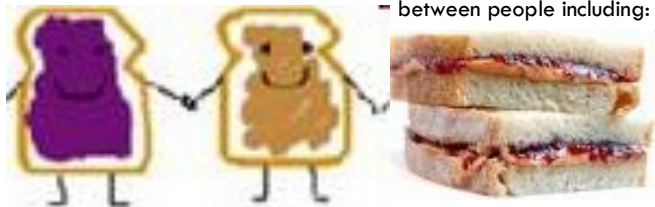
Featured Wellness Issue:

Lets Talk About You and Me Baby, Lets Talk About Intimacy...

By Jill Sullivan, MA

Sometimes when we communicate in our daily lives, we leave out many instructions or details. For example, if you were going to tell someone how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, you might assume that they know a little about getting the bread out of the bag, opening the jars, and spreading the peanut butter and jelly onto the bread. Unlike communicating about making a sandwich, communicating with a partner about sex and intimacy can be more difficult. But, assuming what your partner thinks or feels can be dangerous and confusing. What can help you effectively communicate with your partner about your relationship, intimacy, or sexual concerns? Some ground rules for effective communication are:

- Think about the degree of commitment you hold for each other and the relationship
- Know your own values (where you stand on issues such as relationships, sex, love, and intimacy)



- Understand how your backgrounds (how you grew up) are different
- Have a sense of being equal partners within the relationship
- Build trust for each other
- Pick the right time and place to talk

Once you and your partner have thought about some of these ground rules to be able to talk about issues surrounding intimacy or sexual concerns within your relationship, what else might be important to consider while discussing sex and intimacy? Research has shown several qualities that help bring about honest and open communication between people including:

- Show that you care and respect your partner
- Avoid the use of **always** and **never**, for these are rarely accurate or fair
- Listen carefully and really hear what your partner is saying

- Try to feel what your partner may be feeling and avoid being defensive
- Be open and honest about what you think and feel
- Don't make assumptions on what your partner means, ask them for clarification if you are unsure what they mean
- Allow there to be silence in your conversation, this can help with listening and intimacy within the conversation

Overall, communicating with another human about anything can be difficult, but especially when that subject is of a sexual nature. In our daily lives, it is hard to find the time to sit down with someone that we care about and have an intimate conversation. But, if you think about it, "one cannot not communicate." Even if you ignore someone or something that is bothering you, you are sending a message to your partner, even if you say nothing. While people in relationships can sometimes play games with each other involving power or manipulation, a healthy relationship involves partners that are able to communicate about any issue that may come up in the relationship, including sex or intimacy concerns.

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Mind Matters

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We're on the Web!

[http://www.bsu.edu/
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Ball State University Counseling Practicum Clinic: Serving the Community Since 1969

Mission

- The clinic is a training and research facility for the Department of Counseling Psychology and Guidance Services.
- The clinic provides high-quality, low-cost psychological services to the Delaware County community and beyond.

Service Providers

- Over 50 graduate student counselors under the supervision of faculty.
- Faculty supervisors are licensed psychologists and counselors.

Services Offered

- Individual Counseling
- Couple Counseling
- Family Counseling
- Child/Adolescent Counseling
- Group Counseling with a focus on:
 - Parenting
 - Social skills
 - Anger control
 - Issues of concern to children and adolescents

Hours of Operation

- August-May
 - 9 AM to 9 PM M-Th
 - 9 AM to 12 PM Fri
- The clinic is closed during university vacations and holidays.

All clients have the right to receive timely, competent counseling services consistent with the ethical principles and guidelines established by professional organizations. All counseling services provided at the Counseling Practicum Clinic are guided by the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the American Counseling Association, the American School Counseling Association, the American Rehab Counseling Association, the General Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services, and the Specialty Guidelines for the Delivery of Services by Counseling Psychologists.