



## Connie Podesta's

### Life Would Be Easy Series Part 2 Why We Say What We Say and Do What We Do

*By Connie Podesta*

**You know the saying, “it takes all kinds to make a world?”** Geez, Isn't that the truth? Unfortunately for most of us some of those “kinds” can be a real giant headache-inducing, career-side-tracking, go-out-of-their-way-to-make-you-miserable pest! With four very different personality types to maneuver around -- You've got to be on your game about who you let into your life and influence your days. That's why I'm going to lay it all out for you here and give you a big picture blueprint of what makes people do what they do and say what they say so that you don't have to play “guess that mood” when you run into the “tough nuts.” Armed with that – you'll have what you need to succeed whether you're trying to close a deal with a customer, get a cup of coffee, obtain a resource or even find yourself five minutes peace!

**The bottom line truth?** More often than not – when we get frustrated because the people around us aren't “getting it” or cooperating – it's usually the result of a communication breakdown (and the fact we don't like it at all when someone doesn't agree with us). EVERY time we speak, we choose and use one of four basic communication styles: **assertive, aggressive, passive and passive-aggressive**. In fact, we often use all four in and out throughout the day, depending on what we believe will work best to get our needs met. Let's take a sneak peek inside each one of these styles and what makes them “tick” so that you can then use these clues to better understand and communicate with the people around you. Sound like a plan?

**Assertive Communication:** The most effective and healthiest form of communication is the assertive style. It's how we naturally express ourselves when our self-esteem is intact, giving us the confidence to communicate without games and manipulation.

When we are being assertive, we work hard to create mutually satisfying solutions. We communicate our needs clearly and directly. We care about the relationship and strive for a win/win situation. We know our limits and refuse to be pushed beyond them just because someone else wants or needs something from us. Surprisingly, assertive is the style most people use **least**. (What's up with THAT?)

**Aggressive Communication:** Aggressive communication ALWAYS involves manipulation. We may attempt to make people do what we want by inducing guilt (hurt) or by using intimidation and control tactics (anger). Covert or overt, we simply want our needs met – and right **now!**

Although there are a few arenas where aggressive behavior is called for (i.e., sports or war), it will never work in a relationship. Ironically, the more aggressive sports rely heavily on team members and rational coaching strategies. Even war might be avoided if we could learn to be more assertive and negotiate to solve our problems.

**Passive Communication:** Passive communication is based on compliance and hopes to avoid confrontation at all costs. In this mode we don't talk much, question even less, and actually do very little. We just don't want to rock the boat. And saying the word "no" gives us serious butterflies.

Passives have learned that it is safer not to react and better to disappear than to stand up and be noticed.

**Passive-Aggressive Communication:** A combination of styles, passive-aggressive avoids direct confrontation (passive), but attempts to get even through manipulation (aggressive). If you've ever thought about making that certain someone who needs to be "taught a thing or two" suffer (even just a teeny bit), you've stepped pretty close to (if not on into) the devious and sneaky world of the passive-aggressive. So now what?

Clearly, for many reasons, the only healthy communication style is assertive communication. Surely you can identify many people in your own life that favor each of the four styles.

Most of us use a **combination** of these four styles, depending on the person or situation. The styles we choose generally depend on what our past experiences have taught us will work best to get our needs met in each specific situation. If you take a really good look at yourself, you've probably used each throughout your lifetime.

Understanding the four basic types of communication will help you learn how to react most effectively when confronted with a difficult person. It will also help you recognize when you are using manipulative behavior to get your own needs met. Remember, you always have a choice as to which communication style you use. If you're serious about taking control of your life, practice being more assertive. It will help you diffuse anger, reduce guilt, and build relationships – both personally and professionally.

### **Here's Your Homework -- Take Action!**

Begin to pay attention to which communication styles you use throughout the day. How often do you use a communication style other than assertive? Watch and identify the communication styles some of the difficult people in your life use and begin to notice how others use manipulative techniques to get their way

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