



Connie Podesta's Life Would Be Easy Series – Part 5 Effectively Communicating and Dealing With the Aggressive Person

By Connie Podesta

Here's the deal: Aggressives are like actors on stage. They play a part they have been practicing their whole lives. Their script is to either yell and intimidate or cry and cause guilt. It's a game, unfortunately, a game that usually works. It's time to stop the show and refuse to be an audience or participant to this behavior for good!

Listen, no one likes a bully. Heck, most bullies don't even like themselves! And the whiners & martyrs? They have spent a lifetime blaming everyone and everything without taking a close, hard look at the part they play in creating the life they live. No more! I'm here to teach you what you need to know so that you're always in the driver's seat when it comes to the jerks, bullies, complainers, sad-sacks, overly full-of-themselves and royal pains in the butts. Stoop to their level – no way! Get what you want and need WITHOUT ugly confrontations or compromising your own needs? You bet! I want you to know how to turn the tables, take a stance and get what you want without making a scene. You'll earn more respect, feel more confident and compete on a higher level than you ever thought possible.

Here's the deal with these guys...Aggressive personalities view life from a win/lose perspective, and they create oppositional relationships. Interactions with them become struggles for control of our personality and our life. Their weapons of choice are hurt and anger; their strategy is to either make you feel bad or intimidate you into submission so you will give in, give up or give out. But you always have a choice – and options! So be FEARLESS!

Dealing with the Aggressive Person

The most important thing to remember in any personality conflict is that we cannot change anyone else. However, we can choose to change ourselves and how we REACT to other's attempts to manipulate us. When faced with aggressive behavior, we have two possible responses. First, we can assert ourselves, confront the attack (which means we avoid reacting to the emotions and sensations their tactics trigger in us), and neutralize the onslaught. Go assertive!

Secondly, we can allow ourselves to be drawn in, manipulated and respond by using one of three non-assertive communication styles. We can give in to the attack and avoid the issue at hand (passive); we can resort to imitating the difficult behavior by being manipulative right back (aggressive); or we can attempt to get even and teach them a lesson (passive-aggressive). As long as a difficult person is allowed to behave in an inappropriate or unacceptable way and they are rewarded for this behavior by getting their needs met, they will have **no incentive** to change.

What to do? Know this: Difficult people do not truly respect people who allow them to get away with their manipulations, therefore, we must give the difficult person timely, honest feedback that their behavior is not appropriate or acceptable. Unfortunately, many people try to avoid confrontation hoping to avoid any escalation of an already tense situation, or they avoid confrontation because it contradicts their image of how a “nice person” should act.

Assertive communication means you must let the other person know as soon as possible that their action, tone, or behavior is not the way to handle the situation or a way to get you on their side. Assertive is mature and grown-up, functional and healthy, professional, in-control and confident; it also respectful, caring and comforting.

Let me give you an example: An aggressive response might sound like: “You are so lazy and irresponsible. How many times do I have to tell you to clean up your room?” Or, “Oh, fine. That’s a great idea. I’m sure our clients will really enjoy waiting two extra days for their order.” Or, “I’m sick of dealing with you! I’ve had it!”

A more powerful, effective, assertive, response for each would be “Son, I need you to clean your room now. I know you’ve had a lot going on after school, and it’s easy to get distracted, but this needs to be your number one priority.” Or, “I’m concerned that the new shipping schedule will cause a delay in getting our clients their orders on time. What can we do to make sure this doesn’t happen?” Or, “I’m frustrated and tired right now, and I’m sure you are too, so we’re getting nowhere with this discussion. Let’s talk later”

Three important things changed:

1. The other person has been told that we have noticed their behavior and we feel it is not acceptable, appropriate, or necessary.
2. There were no insults, put-downs, sarcastic statements, or threats used.
3. We did not ignore, reward, accept, or emulate their negative behavior.

Watch out for detours...Aggressives are experts at talking about everything except the subject at hand. They lead you off the path by bringing up the past, changing the subject or putting you on the defensive. You find yourself explaining, apologizing, and making excuses—only to discover later that nothing was ever resolved. The bottom line is that most difficult people are rather cowardly. They really do not want to deal with anyone they think might see through the tears and threats and assertively take them on face-to-face. But aggressive people do want control. They want to get their needs met and have been taught by the rest of us that manipulation using hurt and anger usually works.

Assertiveness requires you to think about what you need to say, how you want to say it, and stick to the subject – **your subject**, not theirs. Be aware of detours and refuse to take them. You do not need to make excuses, defend yourself, or apologize for stating your needs firmly with confidence and taking back control of your life!

IMPORTANT: You need to FEARLESSLY stick to your guns, take a bold stand, and stay calm. (That's the hardest one!) **Aggressives love nothing better than to get you yelling or crying—that's when they know you have simply given away your power.**

Your Homework...Take Action!

Think of a situation where someone has tried to detour you away from the subject. Did their technique work? Will it work next time? Think of an aggressive person in your life who uses hurt to get their way. How do you usually react to them? How could you be more assertive the next time you communicate with them? Which is hardest for you to deal with assertively: anger or hurt? Which one do you use when you want to get your way? Be honest now.

Then once again take a look inward. How do people perceive you? Are you used manipulation as a means to an end? Are you focused on what you want and need above that of what other want and need? Do you ever use anger or guilt to control the outcome of a situation? If so – why? Can you think of some ways to change that behavior to more assertive, more positive means of communication?

Want to learn more techniques and strategies for dealing with DIFFICULT people? Visit my site at www.conniepodesta.com