

Pondering Point

We all know that it's better to be assertive and be heard than to be passed over or misunderstood. Though, there are times, when assertion slides into aggressive communication and can actually turn even the most well-intentioned person into a bully. Pay attention to social cues and be aware that in communication it is not only what we say, it is how we say it. Also, we need to be aware of what our body language is doing to back it all up.

Nothing can steer a normal conversation to conflict faster than aggressive behavior. This leaves the other person feeling attacked and can even leave scars on them that we may never see. Remember, it's important to speak our minds, and it is equally important to leave the conversation with the relationship intact.

Both assertion and aggression are used to move us forward in life, the choice is ours whether we want to leave people inspired or insulted.

Is what you're saying TOXIC?

What are you saying with your body language?

Do you notice that you may hurt others when you speak your mind?

Imagine... making the choice to inspire others every opportunity we have.

— From Pondering to Practice —

Activity

Often we fail to realize the damages we inflict on people caught in the wake of our aggressive communication. This exercise is a great reminder of the powerful impact our behavior has on others.

Try this:

Draw a picture of a person on a big sheet of paper and hang this for all to see. Ask each member to share a time when they hurt someone with what they said. Record each example onto the picture drawn until the whole "person" is filled up. Next, tear and distribute the paper into pieces with each example being separated.

Now ask each person to think of a compliment and share it with the group as the scraps are handed back and taped together.

The idea here is that even though this person may now seem whole, the tear marks (or scars) of the aggressive behaviors still remain. We may never know if those marks will heal, or if that person will now continue the cycle of aggression.

Self Reflection Activity

There have been times in our lives when we have intentionally or unintentionally hurt others with what we said. Take time now to reflect on this. Once we understand ourselves, we can make changes to better our communication, and in turn, get our points across and strengthen our relationships.

Those times that you felt you may have been toxic –

- *Why do you think you were so aggressive?*
- *What was your body trying to tell you?*
- *What may your body language have been telling others?*
- *Who may have been caught up in the wake of your aggressive communication/behavior?*

There might be an opportunity here to make amends with these people!

If you were ever a victim of aggressive communication –

- *How did it make you feel?*
- *Were you able to take in what they were trying to communicate or were you thinking of how you were being treated?*
- *Does this help you understand what others might have been going through those times when you were being aggressive?*

"Aggression unopposed becomes a contagious disease."

- Jimmy Carter