

Pondering Point

Communication is like a game of tennis -- it takes at least two players to play. Someone starts the conversation with a serve in our direction. What we do next determines the flow of the game. Think of returning the serve gracefully and confidently as assertive communication. Charging the net is undoubtedly aggressive communication and disrespectful. If we freeze up and fail to take any swing we are guilty of passive communication. **By not taking a swing at the ball, we are allowing the other person to make all the points.**

Some of us may not know how to be assertive and don't speak up for fear of being viewed as aggressive. How good are we at communicating our needs? Do we let people know how we're feeling? Do we expect them to get information from reading our minds? Assertive behavior means we are communicating what we need. Are we passive if our needs are being addressed? Are we consistently choosing the needs of others over our own? Can we be assertive in some situations and passive in others? What leads us to be passive in the first place? Passive-aggression is making a bad thing worse. If we let enough serves go by, we will end up getting angry and charging the net. **When we participate in a healthy and confident way, we can walk away knowing that we had the courage to speak up and be heard.**

When you PASS - you lose.

Were you in the game at all?



Imagine... speaking up with confidence and getting more out of every conversation.

— From Pondering to Practice —

Activity

In a group, discuss the following:

- *What does it look like to be assertive, aggressive and passive in our communications?*
- *What causes passive behavior?*
- *What are the ramifications to the group when some members are passive communicators?*

Self Reflection Activity

Think of the last time you were communicating with someone and you were passive.

- *What happened?*
- *Who was involved?*
- *How did the situation make you feel?*
- *What contributing factors lead to you feeling passive?*
- *Did you get your needs met?*
- *What did the group miss by you not speaking out?*
- *What would you do differently next time?*

"Too many of us fail to fulfill our needs because we say no rather than yes, or perhaps, yes when we should say no."

- William Glasser