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An Effective Communication Style

5

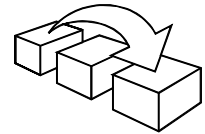
Participants will:

Explore the concept of personal rights

Identify three communication styles and their impact on relationships

Recognize the characteristics of aggressive, assertive, and passive styles*

Objectives



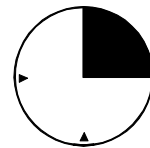
Procedure

Step	Segment Name	Time
1	Welcome and review of weekly recovery issues	30 minutes
2	Topic introduction: Effective communication	5 minutes
3	Open discussion: Personal Rights	20 minutes
4	Break	10 minutes
5	Mini-presentation: Three communication styles	15 minutes
6	Exercise and discussion: Communication Styles in Action	30 minutes
7	Closure and evaluation	10 minutes

Session Length

**2 hours
(120 minutes)**

Session Structure



*The concept of Personal Rights as a foundation for assertive communication is from Lange and Jakubowski, 1978.

Group Leader Materials and Preparation



◆ Materials:

Flip chart or chalkboard
Markers or chalk
Paper and pencils for participants



◆ Prepare before class:

PERSONAL RIGHTS

Use a sheet of flip chart paper to write out the rights as shown: (See handout on p. 91. Discussion begins on p. 79.)

PERSONAL RIGHTS

I have the right ...

to ask for what I want.
to express my thoughts and feelings.
to be free from violence.
to be treated with respect.
to say, "No."
to change my mind.
to ask questions.
to hold a different opinion.
to ask for time to think.
to decide whether or not to act on my rights.



Prepare the **Communication Styles in Action** exercise (p. 94) by cutting the role play situations into strips.

◆ Make copies:



Personal Rights (p. 91)

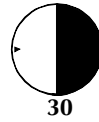
Communication Styles (p. 92)

Characteristics of Communication Styles (p. 93)

Session Five Evaluation (pp. 95-96)

Weekly Recovery Journal (p. 18 — Session 1)

Procedure Steps



Step 1

Welcome and review of recovery issues

- ◆ **Welcome participants** as they arrive.

- ◆ **Introduce the session topic.** Explain that the session will focus on learning more about the importance of communication. How we communicate (in other words, **what** we say, **how** we say it, and how well we **listen**) influences every aspect of our lives, including recovery. The strongest influence is felt in our relationships with people we care about. However, communication style also impacts getting and keeping a job, making new friends, and getting the most out of a counseling session or group meeting. Communication is very much a recovery issue. The purpose of this session is to look at the characteristics of different communication styles, and to begin developing a personal style that is assertive and on track with recovery needs.

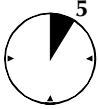
- ◆ **Open the discussion period for weekly recovery issues.** Encourage participants to use their *Weekly Recovery Journals* to keep notes for this discussion time, and to help keep themselves focused on recovery during the week.

- ◆ **Begin by going around the room to ask each participant:** “What is one thing you did in the last week (no matter how small) that really helped your recovery efforts?” Express support, encouragement, and appreciation for each speaker’s contribution. Set a tone for the group that encourages participants to do likewise.

- ◆ **Ask about the specific assignment from the previous week:** What did you find helpful about trying out a “new” solution to an “old” family difficulty this past week? **Encourage participants to share other issues from their journals as well.** Keep discussions focused on recovery, finding solu-



tions to recovery-related problems, and sharing successes (“what works”).



Step 2

Topic introduction: Effective communication

◆ **Reintroduce the session topic and the goals for the session using ideas from the following script:**

SCRIPT:
*Session Topic
and Goals*

This session will focus on what is sometimes called “the art of communication.” Improving social skills and gaining confidence in our ability to communicate effectively has been shown to enhance recovery and reduce the risk of setbacks. It also improves our relationships with the people we really care about.

When we talk about good communication, we are not referring to using proper English or correct grammar, or sounding like a radio announcer. Good communication (or effective communication) means being able to share ideas, feelings, opinions, and plans with others in an open, nondefensive way that enhances understanding and keeps the lines of communication open.

Good communication is also about being able to listen to the ideas, opinions, and feelings of others. The ability to express ideas and listen to others is a skill. When we learn to use this skill on a regular basis, we may begin to see an improvement in our relationships, our sense of self-esteem, and our ability to manage conflicts.

In today’s session and the next few sessions we’ll talk about communication techniques you can use to improve relationships with family, partners, friends, and on the job. However, it’s important to view these skills realistically. Improving your communication style will not eliminate anger, frustration, social pressure, or “bad scenes” from your life. Nor will it

guarantee that other people will always respond in the way you want them to. Improving your communication skills will not make the world a fair place. But, it can help you deal with people in a fair and honest way, and also deal with your feelings in a way that doesn't threaten recovery.

Many communication problems in relationships begin when one or both people involved in an interaction feel hurt, angry, or treated unfairly. In other words, one or the other believes his/her **personal rights** in the communication situation have been violated or ignored. So we'll begin by talking about personal rights.

Step 3

Open discussion: *Personal Rights*

◆ **Distribute the *Personal Rights* handout and use a flip chart outline as shown on page 76 to lead a discussion about the concept of personal rights.** Encourage discussion and provide examples and clarification as needed. **Use ideas from the following script to lead the discussion.**

Personal rights are similar to what you may have heard called human rights. Personal rights are based on an attitude of fairness and equality in all dealings with others. Respect for our own rights and the rights of others helps create close, mutually supportive relationships. It also enhances our ability to establish new friendships and get along on the job.

All of us have personal rights! Every right I have or you have is also the right of every other person. The idea is to respect and stand up for your own personal rights and also respect and not violate the rights of other people.

Personal rights extend to many areas of life. For this session, we'll focus on keeping personal rights in mind when we communicate with others:



SCRIPT:
Personal Rights

SCRIPT:
Personal
Rights
(continued)

I have the right to ask for what I want.

This right acknowledges a basic right to communicate our wants and needs to others. We have the right to ask for what we want. This doesn't mean we'll always get what we want or what we ask for. It doesn't mean we have the right to force or demand what we want from others, either. But we always have the right to ask.

I have the right to express my thoughts and feelings.

This right highlights our basic right to express ourselves to others. Our thoughts and feelings are as worthwhile as the next person's. The right to express thoughts and feelings carries with it the responsibility to respect the thoughts and feelings of others.

I have the right to be free from violence and hostility.

Violence and hostility destroy communication, and ultimately will destroy relationships. We have the right to distance ourselves from any hostile form of communication that threatens our safety or self respect.

I have the right to be treated with respect.

For many people, this is the most fundamental of personal rights. Remember, when we show respect for others we're most likely to be shown respect in return.

I have the right to say "No."

Refusal is a basic human right, and one that is especially important in recovery. When we don't claim our right to say "no" to things we'd rather not do, we may begin to feel resentful or "used." In recovery, learning to say "no" when we need to can lessen the chances of a slip or setback.

I have the right to ask questions.

We're not expected to know everything in life, therefore we have the right to seek out information we don't have. Keep in mind there's no guarantee we'll get an answer, but we do have the right to ask the question.

I have the right to ask for time to think.

As we listen to others (and ourselves) we gain new information and insight. Often, we need some time to process or sort out our thoughts and feelings. This is especially true in making decisions. We always have the right to think before we act or decide on an issue.

I have the right to change my mind.

We have the right to reevaluate a decision and to change it when we think it's best to do so. Although we may choose to explain to others why we've changed our mind, we're not obligated to offer explanations or reasons.

I have the right to hold a different opinion.

We're all entitled to hold our own opinions and beliefs about events, people, religion, politics, etc. We are also free to express our opinions or to withhold giving an opinion, depending on our best interests.

I have the right to decide whether or not to act on my rights.

Accepting a right doesn't mean we have to **act** on it. We may choose in certain circumstances not to speak out on a right. This doesn't mean we give up the right. It simply means there may be times when prudence and wisdom require **not** asserting a right. For example, I have the right to hold a different opinion. In some situations, I may choose to keep that opinion to myself rather than share it.

SCRIPT:***Personal
Rights****(continued)*

**Discussion
Questions****◆ Process the discussion using some of the following questions:**

Are there any other rights which should be added to the list? (Discuss and add appropriate suggestions to the list.)

Which of these rights is the most important to you personally? Why?

How do you feel when someone steps on one of your rights? How do you usually respond?

◆ Summarize using information from the following script:**SCRIPT:**
Summarizing
**Personal
Rights**

The foundation of good and effective communication begins with an attitude of respect for our own personal rights and the personal rights of other people. When we work to make sure our interactions and communications with others are based on equality and fairness, we increase the odds of a favorable outcome.

Adopting the attitudes that contribute to effective communication is a personal decision. In other words, you only have control over your own communication style, not the style of others. As you learn about communication skills, you may become aware that some people communicate poorly and frequently step on other people's rights. You have the right to limit or reduce the amount of time you spend with such people, especially if your rights are continually ignored.

Step 4

Break

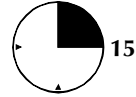
- ◆ Allow a 10 minute break.



Step 5

Mini-presentation: Three communication styles

- ◆ Distribute the *Communication Styles* handout and lead a discussion about communication styles, their characteristics, and their possible outcomes. Model the styles, and provide examples as you lead the discussion.

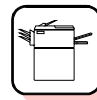


- ◆ Use points from the following script to build your discussion:

There are three communication styles which all of us have used at one time or another. These styles generally reflect our attitudes about ourselves and about other people. As you'll see, an **assertive style** is our best bet for achieving goals and improving relationships because it respects both our personal rights and the rights of others.

The assertive style: This style of communication is considered the most useful for improving self-esteem, enhancing relationships, increasing intimacy and closeness with those we care about, and allowing us to express our thoughts, needs, and feelings in a way that respects the rights of other people. Assertiveness is considered to be the most effective communication style because it promotes **equality** and **fairness** in relationships.

An assertive style enables us to act on our goals in an open, direct and honest manner. It's a style that says to the world: *"I believe I'm important, and I believe you're important, too."*



SCRIPT:
Communication Styles

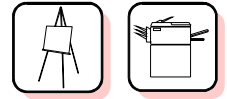
SCRIPT:
Communication
Styles
(continued)

The aggressive style: Practically everyone has used an aggressive communication style at one time or another. However, when it becomes the primary way in which we communicate it can distance us from people we care about, shut down intimacy and closeness, cause people to withdraw from us, and contribute to emotional distress. It lowers self-esteem, both our own and that of those we address aggressively. An aggressive style ignores the rights of others. When we behave aggressively, we express our needs, wants, ideas, and feelings at the expense of another person. This style says to the world: *“I’m important, but you’re not important.”*

The passive style: Most people have used a passive style at one time or another. When we behave passively, we fail to respect our own rights which leaves us open to exploitation or being manipulated by others. When we communicate passively, we deny our rights, our goals, our needs, and our feelings. Because we don’t honestly express our feelings, we are less likely to achieve intimacy or closeness with others. We may be seen as a “pushover,” because we let other people make our decisions or tell us what to do. Passive people may often feel hurt, anxious, inhibited, angry, and resentful. When we behave passively we seldom achieve our goals. This style says to the world: *“I’m not important; you’re more important than I am.”*

For a simple analogy of communication styles, think about the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Recall that Goldilocks thought one bowl of porridge was “too hot,” another was “too cold,” and the third was “just right.” And one bed was “too hard,” the other bed was “too soft,” and the third was “just right.” It’s much the same with communication styles. The **passive** style is “too soft...too cold,” the **aggressive** style is “too hard...too hot.” The **assertive** style may be thought of as “just right.”

◆ **Distribute the *Characteristics of Communication Styles* handout, and use a flip chart to list the properties of the three communication styles as they are discussed.** Ask participants for examples of each characteristic discussed. Provide clarification and model the characteristics described as needed.



Characteristics of the assertive style:

- ❖ Talking in a clear, level tone of voice
- ❖ Using appropriate gestures and motions
- ❖ Maintaining good eye contact when you talk with someone
- ❖ Listening well; not interrupting when others talk
- ❖ Speaking for yourself (*I-statements: — I feel; I think; I believe; I would like*)
- ❖ Asking for what you want
- ❖ Controlling your temper when others are angry or rude

Characteristics of the aggressive style:

- ❖ Using a tone of voice that is sarcastic, mocking, or threatening
- ❖ Yelling or screaming at someone
- ❖ Using intimidating gestures; finger-pointing; glaring
- ❖ Interrupting or telling people to “shut up”
- ❖ Blaming others for your problems
- ❖ Giving orders and using put-downs
- ❖ Using “loaded” words to start fights

**DISCUSSION
POINTS:
*Characteristics
of Communica-
tion Styles***

**DISCUSSION
POINTS:****Characteristics
of Communication Styles**
(continued)**Characteristics of the passive style:**

- ❖ Talking in a tone of voice that is hesitant and unsure
- ❖ Looking down or away when talking with others
- ❖ Saying “yes” when you want to say “no”
- ❖ Covering up what you really feel
- ❖ Going along with others when you don’t want to
- ❖ Apologizing for almost everything
- ❖ Putting yourself down

**Step 6****Exercise and discussion:
Communication Styles in Action**

◆ **Begin by mentioning that the best way to recognize the different ways we communicate is to witness them in action.** Explain to the group that you want them to take part in a brief role play exercise to illustrate what the different communication styles sound like and look like.

NOTE!

A page of role play situations is included on page 94. For convenience, these situations are laid out on the page so they can be copied and cut into slips.

**Role Play
Instructions**

◆ **Ask for two or three volunteers. Give each person a slip of paper with a situation described on it.** Tell the group that each slip describes a situation which requires a response. Ask volunteers to consider their situations, and to develop a **passive** response.

◆ Introduce each situation by reading it aloud to the group. Prompt volunteers with the italicized line next to each situation, and ask them to “role play” a **passive** response.

◆ **Lead a brief discussion using the following questions:**

Ask the volunteers:

How did it feel to give a passive response in this situation?

What reaction might you expect from the other person?

To the group:

What did the volunteers do that really reflected a passive style?

How do you usually respond to a passive style?

**Passive Style
Discussion
Questions**

◆ **Call for new volunteers and distribute situation slips.**

Ask volunteers to read the new situations and develop an **aggressive** response. Prompt using the italicized lines on the situation slip (or invent your own).

◆ **Lead a brief discussion with the following questions:**

Ask the volunteers:

How did it feel to give an aggressive response in your situation?

What reaction might you expect from the other person?

To the group:

In what ways in this type of response different from a passive response?

How do you usually respond to an aggressive style?

**Aggressive
Style
Discussion
Questions**

Assertive Style Discussion Questions

◆ **Change volunteers and distribute situation slips.** Ask volunteers to develop an **assertive** response. Review the characteristics of the assertive style discussed earlier. Remind participants to keep their goals, their rights, and the other person's rights in mind as they build their response. Provide "opening lines" to encourage spontaneity.

◆ After each situation, ask other group members for constructive feedback on the assertiveness of the response given. Encourage discussion about whether or not goals were met and each person's rights respected. **Provide clarification and coaching, as needed.**

◆ **Process the exercise using the following questions:**

Ask the volunteers:

How did it feel to practice assertiveness?

What reaction might you expect to get?

To the group:

When does assertiveness work best?

What are some reasons why people may choose not to be assertive?

◆ **Summarize the communication styles discussion using ideas from the following script.** Encourage questions from participants.

SCRIPT:
*Summarizing
Communications
Styles in
Action exercise*

Often, our choice of a passive, assertive, or aggressive response is influenced by the person with whom we are communicating, or the situation in which we are communicating. We're influenced by a variety of factors when we choose a communication style in a

given situation. Being assertive is always a choice. Remember, we also have the right to choose **not** to be assertive.

In most situations the assertive style is likely to be more effective than either the passive or aggressive style. An assertive style keeps us focused on our feelings, goals, and needs, and enhances fair and equal relationships. It minimizes the chances of communication problems and negative feelings.

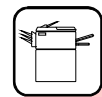
Assertiveness enhances relationships, and increases closeness and intimacy with special people in our lives. It also helps us establish new friendships, and gives us more confidence in groups or new social situations.

Assertive communication is a personal skill. As you begin to develop an assertive communication style, you may begin to notice many people you meet don't communicate very effectively. In fact, other people may react unfavorably to your new way of communicating. You may want to encourage family members to begin coming to counseling sessions with you in order to learn more about effective communication techniques. You may also want to share what you've learned today with your partner, members of your family, and your close friends. In this way you can serve as a teacher and a role model for others. The pay-off is that, with practice, effective communication techniques can help improve your relationships and contribute to your recovery.

Step 7

Closure and evaluation

- ◆ **Distribute a new *Weekly Recovery Journal* sheet** and encourage participants to continue using the journal to record their successes and challenges in recovery in the week to come.

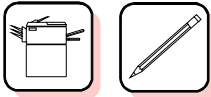


◆ **Provide the following specific assignment:**

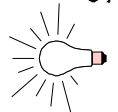
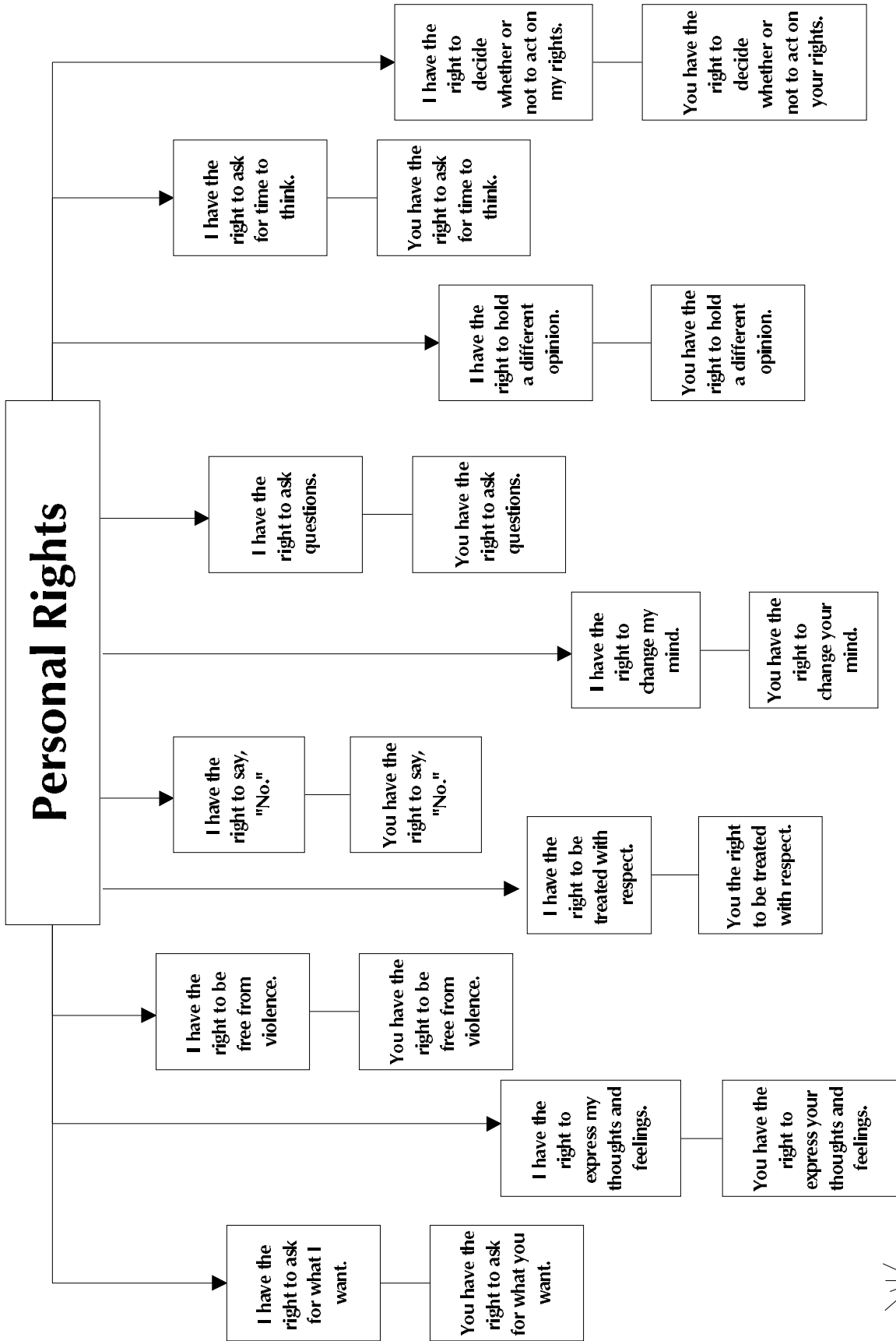
In the week ahead, pay attention to how people use passive, aggressive, and assertive styles when they communicate. Use your journal to keep notes.

◆ **Go around the room quickly and ask participants to share the most important thing they learned from today's lesson.**

◆ **Briefly preview next week's session.**



◆ **Ask each person to complete an evaluation.** Thank people as they leave and extend an invitation to return next week.



Share this map with a friend or family member and talk about ways to better respect each other's rights.

COMMUNICATION STYLES

AGGRESSIVE	ASSERTIVE	PASSIVE
<i>“too hard”</i>	<i>“just right”</i>	<i>“too soft”</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Description:</p> <p>Expresses feelings, opinions, or needs in a way that ignores the rights and feelings of others.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Description:</p> <p>Expresses feelings, opinions, and needs in a way that respects the rights and feelings of others.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Description:</p> <p>Fails to express feelings, opinions, and needs and allows others to step on personal rights.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Message sent:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I only care about me!</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I'm important, but you are not important.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Message sent:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I care about me and I care about you.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>We are both important.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Message sent:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I don't care about me.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>I'm not as important as you.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Example:</p> <p>The waiter brings a cheeseburger when Jack ordered a hamburger. Jack says in a loud, angry voice: “You idiot – do you have wax in your ears? I didn’t order a \$#@%& cheeseburger! I’m gonna tell your manager about this!”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Example:</p> <p>The waiter brings a cheeseburger when Jack ordered a hamburger. Jack says in a calm, polite voice: “I think there’s been a mistake. This is a cheeseburger, and I ordered a hamburger. Please change this for me.”</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Example:</p> <p>The waiter brings a cheeseburger when Jack ordered a hamburger. Jack says in a low, apologetic voice: “I’m sorry – I guess I didn’t give my order right. Uh ... never mind. This is fine. It was probably my fault anyway.”</p>

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION STYLES

Characteristics of the assertive style:

- ❖ Talking in a clear, level tone of voice
- ❖ Using appropriate gestures and motions
- ❖ Maintaining good eye contact when you talk with someone
- ❖ Listening well; not interrupting when others talk
- ❖ Speaking for yourself (*I-statements: – I feel; I think; I believe; I would like*)
- ❖ Asking for what you want
- ❖ Controlling your temper when others are angry or rude

Characteristics of the aggressive style:

- ❖ Using a tone of voice that is sarcastic, mocking, or threatening
- ❖ Yelling or screaming at someone
- ❖ Using intimidating gestures; finger-pointing; glaring
- ❖ Interrupting or telling people to “shut up”
- ❖ Blaming others for your problems
- ❖ Giving orders and using put-downs
- ❖ Using “loaded” words to start fights

Characteristics of the passive style:

- ❖ Talking in a tone of voice that is hesitant and unsure
- ❖ Looking down or away when talking with others
- ❖ Saying “yes” when you want to say “no”
- ❖ Covering up what you really feel
- ❖ Going along with others when you don’t want to
- ❖ Apologizing for almost everything
- ❖ Putting yourself down

Communication Styles in Action

Role Play Situations

Group leaders should provide the “opening line” to which the participants can respond. These opening lines are written in italics after each role play situation.

Deciding on which restaurant to eat at.

(“Hey, where do you want to eat dinner tonight?”)



Responding to a friend who wants to borrow money.

(“Come on, loan me \$10. You owe me a favor, man.”)

Responding to a family member who puts you down.

(“You’re so irresponsible and lazy! You should be ashamed of yourself.”)

Responding to an associate who has asked you to cop for him/her.

(“Look, it’s a quick deal. Just pick it up tonight and I’ll give you a taste.”)

Responding to a boss who yells at you for being late.

(“Hey – we start at 8:00 a.m. here. What’s your problem?”)

Someone cuts in front of you at the grocery check-out.

(“Excuse me. I’m in a hurry.”)

Responding to a partner who calls you names.

(“You’re full of it! You’re the stupidest person I’ve ever seen!”)

Responding to a date who stood you up the night before.

(Hey, babe. Sorry about last night. Whatcha doing tonight?)

Dealing with a coworker who talks a lot and interferes with your work.

(“Hey – I’ve got a great story for you to hear ...”)

Responding to a counselor who has placed you “on contract.”

(“I’m placing you on contract for the next 30 days.”)

SESSION EVALUATION OF *STRAIGHT AHEAD*

SESSION 5

THIS BOX IS TO BE COMPLETED BY DATA COORDINATOR:

[FORM 74; CARD 01]

SITE # __ __	CLIENT ID# __ __ __ __ __ __	DATE: __ __ __ __ __ __	COUNSELOR ID# __ __
[5-6]	[7-12]	MO DAY YR [13-18]	[19-20]

Please answer these questions based on what you learned today. Select the best single answer.

1. An example of a personal right is:
 - (1) The right to ask for what you want
 - (2) The right to express your thoughts and feelings
 - (3) The right to slap someone
 - (4) 1 and 2 above
 - (5) All of the above

|__| [21]

2. Assertive communication lowers your self-esteem. 0=True 1=False [22]

3. In general, the most effective communication style is:
 - (1) The assertive style
 - (2) The aggressive style
 - (3) The passive style
 - (4) The neutral style
 - (5) All of the above

|__| [23]

4. There is a little difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness. 0=True 1=False [24]

5. A possible outcome of always using the passive style is:
 - (1) Lower self-esteem
 - (2) Feeling angry and resentful
 - (3) Being taken advantage of
 - (4) Getting a reputation as a bully
 - (5) 1, 2, and 3 above

|__| [25]

Straight Ahead
 Session 5 Evaluation
 Page 2

For the following items, please circle the number on each line to show how you feel about this session.

- Full 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Empty [26]
- Rough 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Smooth [27]
- Weak 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Powerful [28]
- Relaxed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Tense [29]
- Worthless 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Valuable [30]

Now circle the number on each line to show how you feel right now.

- Pleased 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Angry [31]
- Quiet 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Aroused [32]
- Afraid 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Confident [33]
- Excited 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Calm [34]
- Worthless 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Valuable [35]

If mapping was used in this session, place an “X” on each line to show your opinion about it.

Mapping was...

- Interesting 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Uninteresting [36]
- Difficult 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Easy [37]
- Comfortable ... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Uncomfortable [38]
- Worthless 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Valuable [39]