

What's Your Communication Style?

Name _____ Date _____

Circle or write down your answer to each of the following 10 questions. When you're finished, add up the total number of A's, B's, C's, and D's. Check your responses with the key at the end of the quiz.

1. If someone cuts in front of you in line at the store, which of the following best reflects what you'd likely say:

- A) Nothing, because I don't want to make a fuss.
- B) "Hel-lo! Don't you see me standing here?"
- C) "Hey, get to the back of the line and wait like everyone else!"
- D) "Excuse me, but I was next in line."

2. You need to do some yard work and want help. Which of the following are you most likely to say as you head out the door?

- A) "There sure are a lot of leaves out here. I hope I can get them all swept up before it rains."
- B) "It sure would be nice if SOMEBODY would get off the couch and help me."
- C) "Get your lazy butt over here and help me!"
- D) "I'd like some help with the yard work. Can you please sweep the patio?"

3. You're at a restaurant and order a steak well done. It arrives rare. How would you most likely handle it?

- A) Ask for a "to go" box and cook the steak properly when you got home.
- B) Ask the waiter, "Does this look like well done to you? How hard is it to cook a steak properly?"
- C) Demand to speak to the manager and tell her you want your meal for free.
- D) Tell the waiter that your steak is underdone and ask that it be taken back to the kitchen to be cooked until well.

4. You're in a meeting where the team is discussing a course of action you disagree with. What are you most likely to do?

- A) Say nothing because most of the people like the idea.
- B) Ask if they got the idea from the Easter Bunny or Santa Clause because they're all delusional.
- C) Tell them they're nuts if they think their plan is going to work.
- D) Express your concerns as clearly as possible.

5. You're meeting a friend at the movies. Your mother calls, asking you to come help her hang a picture right away. What are you most likely to do?

- A) Head to your mom's, calling your friend on the way to say you'll be late.
- B) Say, "Why don't you call your precious son? He's your favorite!"

- C) Tell your mom you're not her personal servant and that she should call your brother.
- D) Tell your mom you have plans and say you'll come by after the movie.

6. You overhear a coworker saying that he doesn't like working with you because you're too picky. What are you most likely to do?

- A) Say nothing, because you're embarrassed and hurt.
- B) Think to yourself, "Oh you haven't seen picky yet. Just wait," and make a point of being even pickier to teach him a lesson.

- C) Interrupt the conversation saying, "If you've got something to say to me, say it to my face."
- D) Wait until you can speak to the coworker alone, share what you heard, and ask if you can talk about it."

7. Your company is having trouble with a contractor. Your boss asks your opinion about how to resolve it. What are you most likely to say?

- A) "I don't know, what do you think?"
- B) "Whose idea was it to hire that guy anyway? Oh yeah, it was David, wasn't it?"
- C) "They're all lazy, I doubt we could find anyone better."
- D) "We need to hire another contractor."

8. You order a pound of ham at the deli counter and the clerk mistakenly gives you 1.5 lbs. What are you most likely to do?

- A) Take the ham home and hope your family eats it all before it goes bad.
- B) Say, "I said a pound. Don't you know how much a pound is?"
- C) Tell the clerk you refuse to be ripped off and ask to see the store manager.
- D) Ask the clerk to remove the extra half pound from your order.

9. You're on a tight deadline at work and a coworker drops by to chat about his upcoming fishing trip. What are you most likely to do?

- A) Listen to his plans because he seems so excited about it and you don't want to be rude.
- B) Look at your watch and say, "Oh, are you taking a break . . .again?"
- C) Tell him, "I don't have time to talk about your stupid fishing trip. I have work to do."
- D) Tell him, "Sounds like you're excited about your trip Mark. Unfortunately, I've got to get this report to Sarah in 20 minutes and need to get back to work."

10. You and a friend are meeting for dinner. You don't like the restaurant she chose, but agree to go. It's awful. What are you most likely to say?

- A) Nothing, you don't want to make her feel bad.
- B) "I knew this restaurant was going to be terrible. We should have gone to Claudios."
- C) "Boy, this is terrible. I can't believe you picked this place!"
- D) "It's partly my fault. I've been here before and it wasn't very good."

Total #A's_____Total #B's_____Total #C's_____Total #D's_____

Take your highest score above and find your communication style on the following pages.

Note: If you have two scores that are high and very close in number, this means you probably use both styles as needed.

Mostly A's: Your Primary Communication Style is Passive

The Passive Communication Style is basically characterized by NOT communicating. When passive communication is someone's primary approach, on the plus side, they're probably very well liked by the people in their lives because they're agreeable, pleasant, and always say "yes" to other people's requests. Unfortunately, since passive people rarely stand up for themselves, they're often taken advantage of by people and don't get their needs met. They also usually struggle to express negative emotions and often deny they're upset, thus frustration often builds and manifests itself in stress, physical symptoms, and illness. If passive communication is your primary style for dealing with others, realize that this style is much more focused on others rather than yourself. To get your needs met and achieve your goals, you'll need to learn to approach situations in a more positive, assertive way. When you do, not only will you be happier, but your relationships will be more satisfying, and others will respect you more.

Mostly B's: Your Primary Communication Style is Passive Aggressive

The Passive Aggressive Communication Style is usually used by those who have been thwarted in their efforts to express how they really feel. Sometimes it results from being told by parents, teachers, bosses, or other authority figures, that the person's input wasn't needed or valued. As a result, passive aggressive communicators become frustrated by others' unwillingness to listen and discover that they can use sarcasm, negative hints, and "jabs" to get their point across without taking responsibility for the comments, because they can always say, "I was just kidding." Unfortunately, passive aggressive communication is the most damaging communication style to relationships. It combines the worst characteristics of the passive AND aggressive styles. Although the passive aggressive person thinks he or she is "communicating" in these situations, others are left confused or unable to confront the issue because when confronted, passive aggressive people generally deny there's a problem or reverse the blame on the other person, accusing them of being too sensitive or unable to take a joke. If this is your primary style, you're not alone. Our society seems to have confused passive aggression with humor. You see it on every comedy- the insults, the put-downs, the sarcastic questions. However, realize that every time you use passive aggression to express yourself, you're taking a piece out of the self esteem of the person you're targeting. Additionally, you're not giving that person the chance to openly talk about what you might be upset about, and most importantly, you never get the chance to resolve the problem that caused you to be passive aggressive in the first place. If passive aggressive communication is your primary style for dealing with others, realize that this is the least productive of any communication style. Even though people in the past may not have been willing to listen to your ideas or how you felt, by eliminating the passive aggressive approach to others and adopting a more assertive style, you're more likely to get your needs met and achieve your goals. When you do, not only will you be happier, but your relationships will be more satisfying, and others will respect you more.

Mostly C's: Your Primary Communication Style is Aggressive

The Aggressive Communication Style is characterized by a competitive, "must win" approach. The aggressive person has discovered that by being ultra-direct, in-your-face, and personal, he or she can get others to back down. Bottom line: it's quick and it works . . . at least for the short term. The one thing no one can ever say about an aggressive person is, "I have no idea how he/she feels about this." From aggressive people's perspectives, they're just being honest and "telling it like it is." Although using aggression might help them win in the short term, being aggressive all the time is likely to cause them to lose many relationships. If the aggressive person is a leader, he or she might gain short-term compliance, but see high turnover in the organization, employees may hide problems because they're afraid to approach the leader, and customers will simply walk away to work with someone who listens and cares about their needs. If Aggressive Communication is your primary style for dealing with others, realize that this style is often too focused on your needs rather than the needs of others. You may find yourself "winning the battle, but losing the war." In other words, you could win an argument, but lose a friendship. You may uphold company policy, but lose your best customer. To get your needs met and achieve your goals AND help others do so as well, you'll need to learn to approach situations in a more positive, assertive way. When you do, not only will you be happier, but your relationships will be more satisfying, and others will respect you more.

Mostly D's: Your Primary Communication Style is Assertive

If you answered mostly Ds, CONGRATULATIONS! Your primary communication style is Assertive. The Assertive Communication Style is the most balanced of the communication styles. Assertive people look out for themselves, but also show caring and interest in others. Assertive individuals are able to stand up for their rights, but are also sensitive to the rights of others. People who choose this style are usually excellent communicators, honest about their feelings, respected, and well liked. Their calm demeanor reflects their confidence that they have just the right communication tool in their communication toolbox to handle any situation that comes their way. Of all the communication styles, this one requires the most work and the best communication skills. If you have it, you're more likely than most people to be able to handle difficult situations and people with minimal stress and you're more likely to build long-lasting, open working and personal relationships. However, you always need to remain vigilant.

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