

# Communicating About A Sensitive Topic

## NJ 2020 PERFORMANCE EXPECTATION ALIGNMENT:

**2.1.8.SSH.3** – Demonstrate communication skills that will support healthy relationships

**TARGET GRADE:** Grade 6 **TIME:** 40 Minutes

## MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Worksheets: “Be Assertive!” – one per every two students
- Answer Key: “Be Assertive!” – one copy for the teacher
- Home-School Connection Activity: “Be Assertive!” – one copy per student
- Pencils
- Newsprint - three sheets
- Markers
- Masking tape

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:** By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define three types of communication: passive, assertive and aggressive. [Knowledge]
2. Demonstrate an understanding of assertive communication as the most effective way of telling someone they do not want to do something sexual with them. [Knowledge, Skill]
3. Demonstrate an understanding of how to communicate assertively about one’s own decision to wait to engage in any shared sexual behaviors. [Knowledge, Skill]

## ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Prepare three sheets of newsprint, each of which should have one of the following terms and their definitions:
  - “Passive – when a person doesn’t stand up for themselves or say what they want in a situation,”
  - “Aggressive – when someone says what they want in a way that doesn’t respect or even threatens the other person,”
  - “Assertive – when one person communicates about their wants and needs respectfully, considering the other person’s wants and needs.”

## PROCEDURE:

**STEP 1:** Ask the students, “Have you ever had a misunderstanding with a friend or family member about something you or the other person said?” If they respond yes, ask for some examples. Point out, as appropriate, when the examples given are examples where communication was the issue, not what was said.

**If there aren’t any examples that reinforce that point, say, “You’ve given some good examples. One thing we’re going to talk about today is how it’s not always what we say to people, but how we say it that makes a difference in a situation.”**

*(3 minutes)*

**STEP 2:** Reveal the first newsprint sheet with the word “passive” and the definition. Ask one of the students to read it aloud to the class. **Say, “Let’s have an example. Say someone asked you to go to a movie you really don’t want to see. If you were passive, how might you respond?”** Let a few students try, listening for passive responses. If they do not quite get it, provide the following examples:

- **“Well, I kind of don’t want to see that movie, but if you want to we can.”**
- **“Um, maybe? I’ve kind of seen it, but I guess I could see it again.”**

Point out the passive aspects of the responses. Emphasize that, in the end, what the passive person wants is not being equally considered along with the other person.

Reveal the second newsprint sheet with the word “aggressive” and the definition. Ask a different student to read it aloud. **Say, “Let’s use the same example – someone asks you to go to a movie you really don’t want to see. How do you tell them you don’t want to see it in an aggressive manner?”** After students have given a few responses, feel free to supplement with these examples:

- **“Um, NO – we’re not going to see that movie, we’re going to see THIS one.”**
- **“You really want to see THAT movie? What are you, like 5 years old?”**

Point out the aggressive aspects of the responses. Emphasize that, while an aggressive response may get that person what they want, they’ve hurt the other person unnecessarily. Explain that when someone responds aggressively to us, it can make us feel bad about ourselves – or, depending on how aggressive the person is being, even a bit scared. That’s not a very respectful way to treat other people.

Reveal the third newsprint sheet with the word “assertive” and the definition. Ask a different student to read it aloud. **Say, “Let’s use the same example – someone asks you to go to a movie you really don’t want to see. How do you tell them you don’t want to see it in an assertive manner?”** After students have given a few responses, feel free to supplement with these examples:

- **“I’m not really interested in that movie – are there any others you’ve been wanting to see? What about this one?”**
- **“I’m not up for a movie – what else do you feel like doing?”**

Point out the assertive aspects of the responses. Emphasize that it’s okay to disagree with someone or to propose something different from what they want – but how you do it is important.

*(10 minutes)*

### **STEP 3:**

Ask the students whether they have ever heard the word “abstinence” before. Ask them what they have heard, or what they understand it to mean. Tell them that “abstinence” refers to deciding not to do something for a period of time. Explain that people can choose to abstain from all sorts of things throughout their lives. **Say, “For example, when people go on a diet, they may abstain from eating sugar for a period of time. Then, they might start eating it again in small amounts. That lets them enjoy dessert without experiencing the negative**

**consequences that can come from eating too much of them.”**

Tell the students that for this next activity you are going to focus on abstinence from sexual behaviors. That means waiting to have sex.

Say, **“In my other example, I talked about choosing to abstain from sugar to minimize the negative ways it can affect the body. Can anyone think of reasons why someone might choose to abstain from the sexual behaviors I just mentioned?”**

Potential Student Response/Talking Points:

- They don't want to get pregnant or get someone pregnant
- They don't want to get a communicable disease
- They don't feel like they're old enough/ready

*Note to the Teacher: Some students may say “because it's wrong” or “because it's a sin.” Although these are valid reasons for some students, it is important to avoid shaming those who do have sex. Simply adding the word “some” – “some people have been taught that it's a sin, although not everyone is religious or belongs to the same religion” – can ensure that that student is heard while minimizing the judgment placed on those who may end up having a different experience.*

**After you have heard the reasons given, say, “These are all good reasons. Remember the example I gave about sugar? Some people who choose to abstain from eating sugar do it so that when they do start eating it again they are being careful about their health overall. That's because foods with sugar taste really good – and as long as we eat them in moderation and balance them with other healthy foods, eating sweet food, for some people, is a part of enjoying their lives.**

**Same thing here with sex. People who choose to abstain from sex usually end up having sex at some point in their lives. That's because sex between two mature people, when both people are ready physically and emotionally, have said they wanted to do it and are ready to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy and/or disease, can be a positive experience. But just like with other things in our lives we need to think about how and when to do them.**

**For the purposes of this next activity, I'm going to ask you to imagine that you are in a future mature relationship with someone who wants to engage in some kind of sexual behavior. You know you are not ready, but you really like this person and would like them to be your girlfriend or boyfriend. We're going to practice how you can tell them you want to wait without hurting their feelings or feeling bad about your decision.”**

*(10 minutes)*

#### **STEP 4:**

Review with students the sheet listing some sample ways of saying “no” to someone who wants to do something when you don't. Tell them to read through each and think about whether that response is passive, aggressive or assertive.

Working together as a class, review each choice. Students should circle the answer on the sheet.

Then, if the statement is NOT assertive, work together to re-write the response to make it assertive. Use the “Teacher's Guide: Be Assertive!” as a reference to provide assertive responses if students are stuck.

*(20 minutes)*

### **RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:**

The worksheet activity will ascertain whether students understand what passive, assertive and aggressive communication are and what the differences between them are, which achieves the first two learning objectives. The homework will further reinforce and provide assessment of understanding based on how well they communicate the lesson to their parent/caregiver.

### **HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION ACTIVITY:**

Students are to go home and “teach” a parent/caregiver what they learned.