

# Module 1: Communication

*The use of effective communication skills is an important social competency. This module assists adolescents with distinguishing between aggressive, assertive and nonassertive communication. Adolescents have opportunities to experience using these three types of communication, and to gain an understanding of how assertive communication will assist them in their daily lives. This module serves as a foundation for subsequent modules that will require effective communication skills.*

## Cohesion Building Activity 1: Group Juggling

◆ Task Objectives: Cooperation, problem solving, and listening skills

◆ Materials: 4-6 balls per group (use small balls that are made of a range of soft materials such as nerf, rubber, Styrofoam, and cloth).

◆ Directions:

This activity is best when done with a large group. Facilitator begins by explaining the task to the group. **“There are only two things you have to remember to play this game – remember who throws the ball to you and to whom you throw the ball. Before throwing the ball to the person, you need to call out his or her name. We are going to toss this ball around the group until everyone has gotten it once.”** The facilitator will call out a student’s name and toss the ball to him or her. The student then tosses the ball to another student after saying his or her name. This continues until the ball has reached everyone and has returned to the facilitator’s hands.

Repeat the sequence several times, the last time through, note how many seconds it took to get the ball tossed around the group and report that time to the group (e.g., **“that took us 45 seconds”**). Ask the students: **How we can make the ball progress through the group in the quickest way possible?** (ideas: get the group closer together, stand next to the people you get the ball from and give it to). See how much the group improves its time. Process Questions: **“What did we have to do to get the ball around as fast as possible?” “How did you feel when we improved our time?” “Are there times in your life when you have to solve problems in creative ways?” “How does it help to get assistance from other people for some of the tougher problems you face?”** [feel free to add other process questions]

Finally, have students get back into a large circle and find the place they were standing when we first started the game. Tell them we are going to pass the ball around like we did the first time. The facilitator starts the first ball and after several seconds starts a second ball, then a third ball, then a fourth ball. Finally, when all of the balls have progressed through the group once or twice, and have returned to the facilitator, the facilitator asks the final Process Questions: **“How did you manage to handle all of the balls being tossed to you?” “What happened if you had a ball tossed to you before you were ready for it?” “What did you do if you noticed that the person you were tossing the balls to was not ready for the next one?”** In real life, some times we have a lot of things to deal with, and we have to work extra hard to manage everything - like we did when we were trying to juggle all of these balls. When this happens, it can help to slow down a little so we can figure out how to manage the different things that are flying at us. **“What do you do to manage things when you have a lot to handle?”**

## **CENTRAL ACTIVITY:** Communication Role Plays

- ◆Task Objectives: Understanding and using verbal and nonverbal communication; listening skills.
- ◆Materials: role play descriptions; signs containing the words “assertive, “nonassertive” “aggressive”
- ◆Directions:

▶ Prior to activity, facilitators memorize definitions of nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive communication (use note cards if needed).

▶ At the beginning of the session – hand each student a set of communication cards (see page

▶ At the start of the activity, facilitators present students with examples of each style of communication.

### ◆ **Nonassertive:**

Act out the following scene demonstrating nonassertive communication. Prior to the role play, tell the students to watch the facilitator (i.e., “focal teen”) that will be communicating nonassertively (but do not tell them how the person will communicate). The other two “teens” should be persistent by not overly aggressive in their communication.

**Two teens are pestering a third teen to let them cheat off her test during an exam. The student does not want to let them cheat but responds nonassertively to the other two teens’ demands to let them cheat.**

After the role play, ask the students how the focal teen was communicating. They may not use the word nonassertive, but may say things like “she did not stand up for herself” “she let the other people push her around.” Tell the students that they are correct and then tell them that this kind of communication is called “Nonassertive communication.” Hold up one of the signs that contain the word “Nonassertive.” Then tell the students the definition of nonassertive communication:

**Nonassertive:** avoiding saying what you think, feel, want, or believe because...

- You are afraid to risk the consequences
- You don’t believe in your own rights
- You don’t know how to speak up for yourself
- You think another person’s rights are more important than yours

### ◆ **Aggressive:**

Act out the following scene demonstrating aggressive communication. Prior to the role play, remind the students to watch the facilitator (i.e., “focal teen”) that will be communicating aggressively (but do not tell them how the person will communicate).

**Two teens are pestering a third teen to let them cheat off her test during an exam. The student does not want to let them cheat but responds aggressively to the other two teens’**

**requests to let them cheat. The other two teens become aggressive in response to the focal teen's aggressiveness.**

After the role play, ask the students how the focal teen was communicating. They may not use the word aggressive, but may say things like "she was in their face" "she was putting them down." Tell the students that they are correct and then tell them that this kind of communication is called "Aggressive communication." Hold up one of the signs that contain the word "Aggressive." Then tell the students the definition of aggressive communication:

**Aggressive:** saying what you think, feel, want, or believe in ways that deny another person's right to be treated with respect (anger, meanness, hurtfulness, put-downs, spitefulness, etc)

◆ **Assertive:**

Act out the following scene demonstrating assertive communication. Prior to the role play, remind the students to watch the facilitator (i.e., "focal teen") that will be communicating assertively (but do not tell them how the person will communicate).

**Two teens are pestering a third teen to let them cheat off her test during an exam. The student does not want to let them cheat and responds assertively to the other two teens' requests to let them cheat. The other two teens back down in response to the focal teen's assertiveness.**

After the role play, ask the students how the focal teen was communicating. They may not use the word assertive, but may say things like "she stood up for herself" "she did a good job telling them no." Tell the students that they are correct and then tell them that this kind of communication is called "Assertive communication." Hold up one of the signs that contain the word "Assertive." Then tell the students the definition of assertive communication:

**Assertive:** saying what you think, feel, want, or believe

- In ways that don't damage another person's right to be treated with respect
- In straightforward, nonthreatening ways
- In ways that don't deny your own rights

Tell the students that they will get to do some role plays demonstrating communication. Divide the students into three equal groups. Have each group go with a facilitator to one corner of the room. Read to the students the description of what they will role play. Have 2-3 students volunteer to do the role play (the number of students needed will depend on the role play). Have the students quietly decide if they are going to demonstrate aggressive, nonassertive, or assertive communication. Permit 5 minutes for the groups to prepare for the role plays. One of the facilitators should be the time keeper.

► **Role play topics:**

- Your friends are nagging you to go to a party you don't really want to go to, but they insist that if you are a true friend, you will go. How will you handle this?
- Your teacher assigns a project you don't understand and you don't know whether you will be able to do it. How will you handle this?
- Your friend borrows your favorite CD and returns it scratched without saying anything about it. When you attempt to use the CD and find that it doesn't work, you are angry. How will you handle this?
- You agree to meet two of your friends after school at their locker. You wait for half an hour, getting more frustrated all the while. Finally, having been stood up by your friends, and missing the bus, you have to walk home from school. How will you handle this when you see your friends the next day?

- Your boyfriend/girlfriend tags along with you between classes and everywhere else, and you have been brushing off your friends. Your best friend asks you why you have been ignoring your friends and spending all your time with your boyfriend/girlfriend. How will you handle this?
- You are playing basketball with some people in your neighborhood and a person you don't know very well keeps bumping into you during the game, and at one point knocks you down. How will you handle this?
- Your friends are picking on a kid that is new to the school. You don't like this and want your friends to stop. How will you handle this?
- Several of your friends started smoking weed. They want you to join them, but you would rather not. You are worried they won't want you to hang out with them anymore. How will you handle this?
- Your parents don't like one of your friends because they think your friend is sneaky and rude. You are worried your parents will try to make you stop hanging out with this person. How will you handle this with your parents?
- You decide you are no longer interested in the person you are dating. You decide you are going to break up with him/her on your next date. How will you handle this?

Let each group take turns doing their role play. For all nonactors, hand each one a set of 3 cards containing the words: assertive, nonassertive, and aggressive. At the end of each role play, have them hold up their cards indicating which type of communication they observed – briefly ask them why they saw it that way.

After each group has had one turn, if there is time remaining, they can take a second turn. Permit 15 minutes after the role plays to discuss the process questions and complete the module evaluations.

► Process:

- Ask students what the most important aspects of communication are.
- How does being aggressive in your communication work against you?
- How does being nonassertive in your communication work against you?
- How does using assertive communication help you to get your point across without:
  - making the other person feel defensive?
  - making the other person unsure of what you really want?

**Outside Experience:**

Notice how others communicate in daily interactions. See if people are assertive, aggressive, or nonassertive.

**Retrospective Pre/Post Evaluation (see attached)**

**Appendix: Contains communication cards; additional information on assertive versus aggressive communication; additional activity “Duplo communication activity” provided.**

## MODULE 1: COMMUNICATION

**County** \_\_\_\_\_ **School** \_\_\_\_\_ **Code** \_\_\_\_\_  
 (completed by facilitator)

**Grade in school** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age** \_\_\_\_\_ **Circle one: male female**

**Race/Ethnicity:**    **Black/African American**    **White/Caucasian**    **Hispanic/Latino**  
                           **Native American**    **Asian American**    **Other** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please circle the number that indicates how much you enjoyed the activities.**

	Not At All	A little	Some	A lot
1. I enjoyed the group juggling (ball toss) activity.	1	2	3	4
2. I enjoyed the role play activity.	1	2	3	4

**Please circle the number that indicates what you knew before and after participating in this session.**

	Before this session				After this session			
	Not At All	A little	Some	A lot	Not At All	A little	Some	A lot
I knew how to communicate assertively.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
I understood the problems with nonassertive communication.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
I understood the problems with aggressive communication.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
I knew how to get people to listen to my ideas.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
I knew how to get people to cooperate with me.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

# APPENDIX

## COMMUNICATION CARDS

Best if printed on a color printer. Cut out strips and laminate them or past them onto a cardboard backing.

**ASSERTIVE**

**AGGRESSIVE**

**NONASSERTIVE**

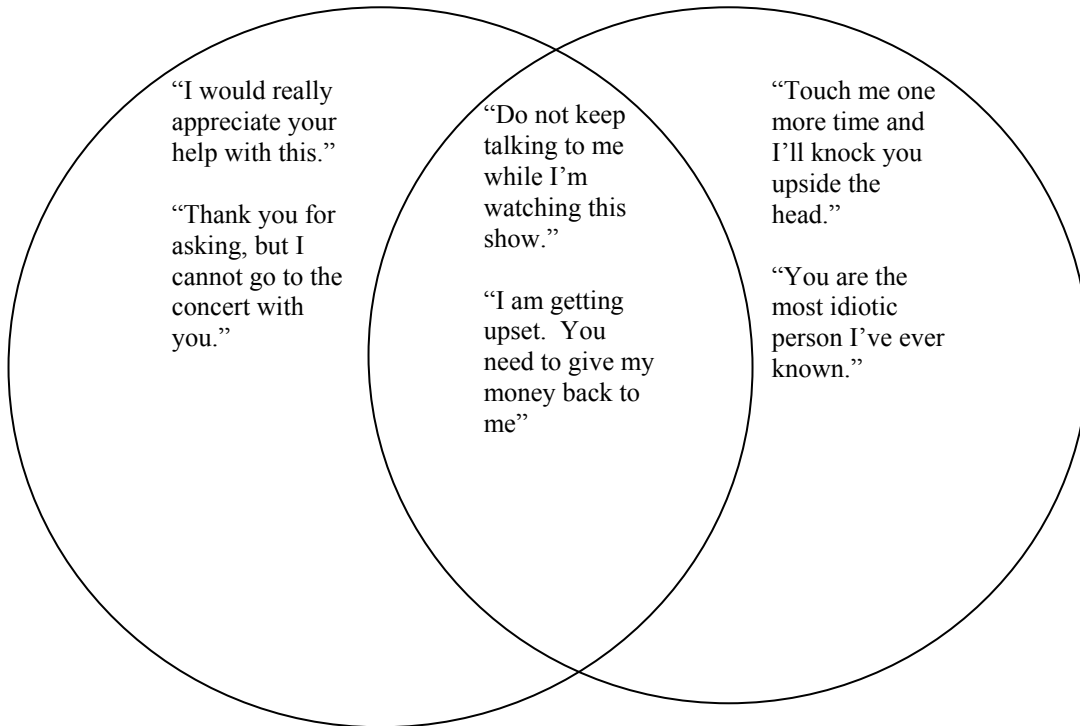
## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ASSERTIVE AND AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATION

Sometimes adolescents have difficulty distinguishing between “assertive” and “aggressive” communication. If after doing the role plays, it appears that some of the teens need additional clarification regarding what distinguishes “assertive” from “aggressive” communication, try this second activity. Draw these circles on a giant post-it that you place on the wall and write the labels above the circles as shown. Have the students generate examples of what might be done or said that is clearly assertive, clearly aggressive, or a blend. Write the example ideas in the circles as shown. Have the students add additional ideas.

Assertive

Assertive or Aggressive

Aggressive



After writing the ideas in the circles, note that the assertive communication is clearly respectful to the other person, whereas the aggressive communication is clearly disrespectful and threatening. Sometimes, we say things that can be interpreted as assertive or aggressive. It is how we say it and the gestures we make that indicate the difference. Have the students say the items listed in the overlapping part of the circles in “assertive” and “aggressive” ways. Ask them if they can tell the difference.

Next, review with the students the following:

Assertive communication involves expressing feelings about yourself and making choices that are best for you. The goal of assertive behavior is to solve a problem and conveys that you may be willing to negotiate with the other person, if they engage in respectful behavior toward you.

Aggressive communication is confrontational and angry. You are trying to make yourself look good by making others look and feel bad. Your goal is to win by harming others.

## DUPLO COMMUNICATION ACTIVITY

- ◆ Task Objectives: Cooperation, problem solving, verbal and nonverbal communication.
- ◆ Materials: Enough duplos (or a similar product; these can be obtained from Wal-Mart) so that there are 10 duplo blocks for every group of 6 adolescents. Set of clues for each group of 6 adolescents for constructing the “correct” duplo structure.
- ◆ Directions: Have participants get into groups of 6. Ask them to sit in a circle around a table facing each other. Hand each group 10 duplo blocks (ensure in advance that they have the 6 blocks in their set that they will need to satisfy the clues). Hand each member a clue. Ask the participants not to let anyone see their clues and not to talk with each other. Let members know that they will be building something that satisfies all of their clues. Explain what “connectors” are the nub like protrusions on each of the duplo blocks that allow them to fit together – some blocks have four connectors and others have eight connectors. Tell them they should start building their group object, but **they may not talk or show their clue to anyone**. Instead they must use gestures to indicate what they want. After 5 minutes have passed, tell groups that **they may talk to each other, BUT they may not say what their clue is or show their clue to anyone**. They can tell others whether or not their clue is satisfied. After 5 more minutes have passed, tell group that they may show their clues to each other and make sure the object satisfies all of them. Once all groups have built an object that satisfies the clues - put the objects up front for all to see. *Note that they all look a little different, but they all satisfy the same set of clues.* Move to the “processing stage”

### PROCESS QUESTIONS

#### Describe What Happened and How it Felt

1. What was your group trying to accomplish?
2. What were some things you observed while your team was trying to accomplish the task?
3. What were some feelings you had while trying to accomplish the task?

#### Analyze and Reflect on What Happened

1. What were some things that you or others did to help your team accomplish the task?
2. What were some things that got in the way of accomplishing the task?
3. What would have made it easier to accomplish your task?

#### Relate Task to Other Situations

1. How does this task relate to experiences you have had communicating with other people?
2. What happens when you do not tell people “directly” what you need?

#### Apply Information Learned to Materials and Programs for Parents and Teens

1. How does the task help you think about the kinds of things needed to strengthen communication with other people?
2. How might you use this information the next time you want to communicate something important to your parents, a teacher, or a friend?

## THE 6 DUPLO CLUES

1. *Only 2 of the blocks are the same color.*
2. *For 3 of the blocks you use, they will be stacked directly on one another and all of their sides will be perfectly aligned.*
3. *The block that is exactly in the middle of the stack is blue.*
4. *Whenever blocks are connected, four connectors will be used (no more, no less).*
5. *When you are finished, exactly 12 connectors will be exposed, 8 of which must be orange or green.*
6. *One of the blocks must be yellow.*

Here is a simpler version of clues:

1. *Only 2 of the blocks are the same color.*
2. *3 of the blocks must be the small ones with 4 connectors.*
3. *The block that is exactly in the middle of the stack is purple.*
4. *There must be a total of 5 blocks used (no more, no less).*
5. *2 of the blocks must be the large ones with 8 connectors.*
6. *One of the blocks must be yellow.*