How to Handle Passive-Aggressive Personalities

Presented by
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BB12
5/3/2018
2:15 PM
How to Handle Passive-Aggressive Personalities

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Have you ever met someone who...

1) Ignored someone because they were upset or did not like something that was said or done?
2) Made a snarky comment under their breath?
3) Said they liked you to your face and then spoke ill of you when you were not around?
4) Held strong to the belief that they were right despite evidence to the contrary?
5) Didn’t finish their work timely or regularly showed up late?
Understanding Passive Aggressive People Starts with YOU!

Definition of pas·sive-ag·gres·sive:

*adjective*

of or denoting a type of behavior or personality characterized by indirect resistance to the demands of others and an avoidance of direct confrontation, as in procrastinating, pouting, or misplacing important materials.

According to PsychologyToday.com

People think that passive aggressive people...

- Withhold (silent treatment)
- Sabotage (do not finish what they start or do something the wrong way intentionally—which may be a means of getting attention)
- Withdraw (sullen behavior)
- Are resistant (stubborn)
- Make backhanded compliments/disguised insults (sarcastic/snide remarks)

But really...

What if passive aggressive people or behaviors are misunderstood?

• They might be suffering from high anxiety and low self esteem
• They might not be appreciated in the way/manner that they need to receive appreciation (see Dr. Paul White’s “The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace)
• They are hurt and are using the strategy of passive aggressiveness to let us know they are in pain
• They might have a fear of direct confrontation and are communicating in the only way they know how

Communication is KEY!

A large amount of passive aggressive behavior comes from an inability to communicate and express one’s feelings in a healthy way (especially when it comes to something that could be perceived as negative) such as:

• Expressing a want or need that is not the accepted norm or the group’s want or need
• Giving feedback that might have the person “look bad” or might be considered confrontational
• To say that they do not like something

*Passive aggressive behavior often comes from a fear of not being approved of, which can eventually manifest into frustration and resentment when repressed rather than expressed.

https://www.coachingpositiveperformance.com/8-examples-passive-aggressive-behaviour/
Why do we often feel like we are in a lose/lose situation with passive aggressive people?

UPSET (from the passive aggressive person) X (multiplied by your reaction to that person’s behavior) \( \text{REACTION} = \text{UPSET}^2 \)

If you just...

• Allow a breath
• Ask yourself: “Am I taking this personally?”
• Look at how you could be contributing to the upset
• Learn how to appreciate the passive aggressive person in a way that works for them and helps them to feel understood
• Provide resources/tools and training to the passive aggressive person, as well as others on dealing with low self esteem and people who are hurting
Then you could...

• CREATE A WIN/WIN SITUATION!

What are some tools to work with passive aggressive people or behaviors?

• Listen/Hear/Relate/Include/Release

• Listen to what the person is upset about by being curious and asking open ended questions

• Hear the underlying problem even if it is not explicitly stated (which it might not be)
Listen/Hear/Relate/Include/Release

• Relate to their problem by using tools such as key-word backtracking
• Include the person by using words like “us” and “we” rather than “I” or “me” (often the root of upset with passive aggressiveness could be a lack of belonging)
• Release your attachments to what you think they should do

Additional tools/strategies when working with passive aggressive behavior

• Always create a paper trail
• Calmly assert yourself
• Keep open body language
• Soften your language
• Be clear in your communication

http://signewhitson.com/
Is it possible that you might occur as passive aggressive?

• Step 1: Look at how/where it might be true
• Step 2: Ask yourself: “What is missing in my life or is an area in my life where I need to be acknowledged?”
• Step 3: Ask yourself: “Why do I need to be acknowledged?”
• Step 4: Ask yourself: “How do I need to be acknowledged?”

• Step 5: Ask yourself: “Who do I need to be acknowledged by?”
• Step 6: If that person is not available to acknowledge you, check to see if you can acknowledge yourself or have someone stand in proxy for that person.
• Step 7: If that person is available, communicate clearly to them: What/Why/How you want to be acknowledged and let them know the difference that will make for you

*Also check and see if this is something you need to regularly be acknowledged for or if it is a one time occurrence.
Resources

- http://www.appreciationatwork.com/
- http://signewhitson.com/
- https://www.coachingpositiveperformance.com/8-examples-passive-aggressive-behaviour/
- http://time.com/4916056/passive-aggressive-definition-meaning/
- http://www.understandmen.com/

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Your opinion matters!

Please take a moment now to complete the evaluation.

Thank You!