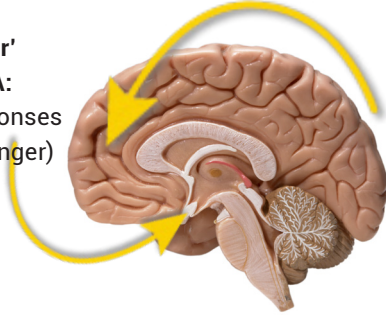


# Communication Definitions & Discussion Questions

**'The Reactor'**  
**AMYGDALA:**  
Emotional Responses  
(fear, anxiety, anger)



**'The Thinker'**  
**FRONTAL LOBE:**  
Impulse Control &  
Rational Thinking

**Assertive:** Clearly stating opinions and feelings, and firmly advocating for rights and needs without violating the rights of others. Assertive communicators respect themselves and others.

**Passive:** Avoiding expressing opinions or feelings, protecting rights, and identifying and meeting needs. Passive individuals do not respond directly. Instead, they allow hurt and anger to build up and may explode or act out of proportion to the trigger. Then, they feel shame, guilt, and confusion, so they return to being passive.

**Aggressive:** Expressing feelings and opinions and advocating for needs in a way that violates the rights of others. Aggressive communicators are verbally and/or physically abusive.

**Passive-Aggressive:** Appearing passive on the surface but acting out anger in a subtle, indirect, or behind-the-scenes way. Passive-aggressive communicators usually feel powerless, stuck, and resentful or incapable of dealing directly with the object of the resentments so they subtly undermine the object of their anger.

**Communication & the Brain:** The amygdala is an almond-shaped organelle in the Limbic System that processes emotional responses. When we feel threatened, the amygdala signals the brain to move neural activity away from the frontal lobe and into the limbic system to start the fight or flight response. When the amygdala turns on and the frontal lobe shuts down, people may revert to aggressive or passive communication. Use emotional regulation and anger management to keep the amygdala off and the frontal lobe on to assertively communicate.

## Critical Thinking Section

### Students:

- What communication style do you most engage in?
- Do you change your communication style depending on who you are talking to? Give examples.
- How or who did you learn your communication style from? What are your family members' styles?
- What are the pros and cons of your communication style?
- What are the obstacles in between you and being a more assertive communicator?
- How does it feel when people use passive-aggressive communication?
- How do you handle miscommunications?

### What is the origin of your passive-aggressiveness?

Research indicates passive-aggressive behavior begins in childhood. Parenting styles, family dynamics, and other influences may cause children to feel unsafe communicating directly. So, they show their negative emotions in subtle ways such as:

- Sarcasm
- Frequently criticizing or protesting
- Subtle sabotage
- Procrastinating or being forgetful
- Mumbling to self
- Being disagreeable, irritable or cynical
- Withdrawing or giving the 'silent treatment'
- Gossiping or talking behind someone's back
- Being stubborn or blaming others
- Pretending to be cooperative but subconsciously undermining

### Family & Staff:

- How do you model assertive communication to youth?
- What triggers your passive, aggressive or passive-aggressive behaviors?
- How do you judge the way youth communicate compared to the way you grew up communicating?
- How is technology affecting the way youth and adults communicate? What are the pros and cons?
- How does the way youth communicate affect their social skills? Conflict management skills?
- How can or do you teach young people to be assertive communicators?