



healthy transitions

Promoting Resilience and Mental Health in Young Adolescents



Session 4:
Communication

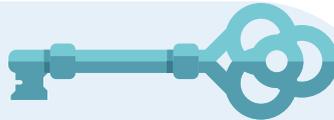
Communication

Let's Get prepared!

Copy:

- *Drawing Bugs* handout (one per student)
- *Talking to Others: Aggressive Passive and Assertive* handouts (one of each per student)
- *Listening Well* handout (one per student)

Key Messages for the Session



- The way we communicate has consequences for :
 - Whether or not we get what we want
 - Our relationships
 - How others see us and treat us
 - Whether or not problems get solved or get worse
 - Our feelings and the feelings of others
- Assertive communication is usually the best way to :
 - Promote good relationships and emotional well being in ourselves and others
 - Get our needs met (although it's no guarantee)
 - Resolve conflicts
 - Express feelings
- Assertive communication takes practice.
- There are situations where passive and aggressive responses may be the best choice.

Session Outline



- 10 minutes: Warm Up Activity:
Drawing bugs
- 25 minutes: How to Talk So
Others Will Listen
- 10 minutes: True/False Activity

- Additional activity: Crossword



10 min.

Warm Up Activity: Drawing Bugs

Objective:

Students will appreciate other people's perspectives on the same situation.

Structure: Large group activity

Method:

1. Distribute the *Drawing Bugs* handout and tell the students that you're going to describe a bug, and that you'd like them to draw a bug just like it. Students will not be able to ask questions or look at the original drawing during the activity. Students should not look at each others drawings during the activity.
2. Describe the bug for students to draw:
 - The bug is round.
 - The bug has eight legs, grouped in pairs with four legs on the left and four legs on the right. In the pairs, one leg is longer than the other.
 - The bug has two eyes on top of the body.
 - The bug has two squiggly antennae.
 - The bug has two tree leaf shaped wings.
 - The bug has a spot next to each wing.
 - The bug has a triangular stinger on the bottom of the body
 - The bug has two feelers on each foot - one longer than the other.
 - The bug has a round mouth, placed between the two eyes.
 - The bug laid five square eggs to the left of the stinger.
3. After everyone is finished, ask students to hold up their drawing for the entire group to see.
4. Facilitate a brief discussion with the following questions:
 - How did it feel not being able to clarify the instructions?
 - Why were people so concerned about 'doing it right?'
 - Why do all the bugs look different? (Everyone has a different interpretation of the description, based on personal life experiences.)
 - What would have helped so that the drawings would look more alike? (Asking questions and clarifying would have helped.)
 - Does this activity demonstrate anything about real life? (There are many different ways of looking at the same situation; clarifying what you've heard is important.)

From: Building Dynamic Groups-Ohio State Extension [www.ag.ohio-state.edu~bdg/](http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~bdg/)

How to Talk so Others Will Listen

Introduction:

There are three different ways to present this activity's information. Please review the three options and choose the strategy that fits best with the needs of your class and your facilitation style. The scenarios are guidelines that can be adapted.



25 min.

Objectives: (for all three scenarios)

Students will:

1. Describe 3 basic communication styles (aggressive, passive, assertive)
2. Consider the consequences of various communication styles.
3. Value assertive communication as the preferred way to:
 - Promote good relationships and emotional well being in ourselves and others
 - Get our needs met (although this is no guarantee)
 - Resolve conflicts
 - Express feelings

OPTION 1

Structure: Role-play

Method:

1. Distribute the *Talking to Others* handout.
2. Define communication (verbal, non-verbal).
3. Explain there are many ways to express our needs, wants and feelings.
4. Tell students that you will be discussing three main communication styles – Aggressive, Passive and Assertive – and role-playing each communication style.
5. Use the same scenario for each communication style to help students visualize differences between aggressive, passive and assertive communication. In the first two aggressive and passive scenarios, the educator usually plays the “parent” and the facilitator plays the “youth”. In the assertive example, the facilitator plays the “parent” and a student practices assertive communication by playing the “youth” role.
6. Before each role-play, have a student read the corresponding handout (aggressive/assertive/passive) and discuss the style of communication.

Materials:

- *Talking to Others* handout



- *Methods of Communication*

Methods of Communication

Whining, pointing out how unfair the situation is	Threatening/getting angry
Pleading, begging	Having a temper tantrum
Not being direct, giving big hints	Not saying anything but making sure they know you're upset (silent treatment)
Making the other person feel guilty	Sucking up
Repeating the same request over & over (pestering)	Negotiate & compromise
Be honest, stating your case, expressing what is important to you, and paying attention to the other person's concerns	State in a direct way what you want and speak in a calm voice

7. Choose two people to role-play. (Using the facilitator as the parent and the educator as the youth often works well). Both presenters will use the same communication techniques. For example, both participants will use aggressive communication in the aggressive skit and passive communication in the passive skit.
8. *** After each skit, discuss how effective the communication was and what made the communication aggressive, passive or assertive.
9. Encourage additional students to volunteer if time allows.

Aggressive Communication

Highlight to students that the use of “You statements” (e.g. “You never listen”, “you don’t understand”, etc.) makes the other person feel like the situation is their fault, and makes the other person defensive and less likely to listen to you.

Scenario: A parent (usually role played by an educator) has had a busy/stressful day at work and is now trying to get dinner ready. The youth (usually played by the facilitator) wants to go see a movie with friends even though it is a school night.

Youth: using aggressive verbal and non-verbal communication:

- Enters the kitchen and asks to go see a movie tonight

Parent: using neutral communication asks:

- “It’s a school night. Have you done your homework?”

Youth: using aggressive verbal and non-verbal communication:

- Complains that they never get to go out with friends
- Makes excuses about homework
- Demands to go out even though it is a school night.
- Becomes angry, Stomps feet, etc.

Passive Communication

Using the same scenario, below is what a passive communication response might look like.

Youth: using passive verbal and non-verbal communication:

- States ... “All my friends are going... It’s not fair...” and walks away slowly.

Parent: Continues to work in the kitchen.

Assertive Communication:

Highlight the use of “I statements”. “I need, I want, I feel” expresses feelings and needs without making the other person feel accused or defensive. Using the same scenario, have a student volunteer come up and act out what assertive communication would look like for this scenario.

Scenario:

- *** Presenter now plays the role of the parent and a student volunteer plays the role of the youth.
- The student is encouraged to use assertive verbal and non-verbal communication. Students may need practice and assistance. You may ask more than one student to come up and try different assertive strategies.

Suggested strategies to discuss with students are:

- ✓ Student asks to talk to the parent (in order to get their parent’s attention)
- ✓ Use “I statements”
- ✓ Use Negotiation and/or compromise/consensus .

Youth: Using assertive verbal and non-verbal communication, asks to go to the movie. Communicates and responds to parent using different assertive communication strategies.

Parent: As the parent in the above scenario, you can chose to either let your child go to the movies with their friends on a school night; or not and negotiate (reach a consensus) an alternative solution together.

OPTION 2

Structure: Role-play

Method:

1. Distribute the *Talking to Others* handout.
2. Define communication (verbal, non-verbal).
3. Explain there are many ways to express our needs, wants and feelings.
4. Tell students that you will be discussing three main communication styles – Aggressive, Passive and Assertive – the teacher and the facilitator will be role-playing each communication style. Normally, the facilitator plays the role of the "parent", and the teacher plays the role of the "youth". Both participants must use the same communication technique (for example, both use aggressive communication in the first scenario and passive communication in the second).
5. Role-play the same scenario for each communication style (3 role-play situations) to help students visualize differences between aggressive, passive and assertive communication.

6. Before each role-play, have a student read the corresponding handout (aggressive/assertive/passive) and discuss.
7. After each skit, discuss the effectiveness the communication and what made the communication aggressive, assertive, or passive.

Scenario: A youth wants to go out to a late movie at 9:00 pm. The parent is worried and does not want the youth to go. Youth had previously missed curfew. Parent is concerned about safety, upcoming tests and projects and who they are hanging out with. “Everyone is going”, youth feels left out.

Aggressive Communication

Highlight to students that the use of “You statements” (e.g. “You never listen”, “you don’t understand”, etc.) makes the other person feel like the situation is their fault, and makes them defensive and less likely to listen to you.

Possible youth aggressive communication:

- “You statements” such as – you never, you always, you are the worst parent ever, you hate me
- “I’m always left out”
- “I am going to do it anyway...”
- Yelling, stomping feet, rolling eyes

Possible adult aggressive communication:

- “You statements” such as - “You never follow up with what you say you will”
- “You have to study or you will fail the next test like you did the last one.”
- “I don’t trust you!”
- “I forbid you! If you go out, you will be grounded from using data/Wi-Fi for the rest of the year!”
- “Because I say so!”
- Yelling, aggressive posture, gestures etc.

Passive Communication

Using the same scenario above, have the presenters role-play as they did in the previous scenario using a passive response.

Possible youth passive communication:

- “Everyone is going and kids who do not go are going to be left out.”
- “I really love watching this actor.”
- “Everyone is going to have so much fun. I really should study.”
- “I have studied hard for my test.”
- “I love spending time with my friends!”

Possible adult passive communication:

- “Yes, that would be fun!”
- “Yes, you really do need to study for the test.”
- “I like that actor too.”

Assertive Communication

Using the same scenario above have the teacher and presenter role-play as they did in the two previous scenario using an assertive response. Highlight the use of “I statements”. “I need, I want, I feel” expresses feelings and needs without making the other person feeling defensive, like they are being accused.

Possible youth assertive responses:

- “A lot of my friends are going. I would really like to go because it is my best friend’s birthday.”
- “I know I have a big project due. What if I study really hard tonight and then right after school tomorrow to make up for it?”
- “I know you are worried about me. Would it help if I text you when I get to the theatre?”

Possible adult assertive responses:

- “I am worried because the movie is so late, I don’t know your friends and it gets dark very early.”
- “I worry when you don’t make it home at a reasonable time. When you came back, an hour late last time, it was really difficult for me.”
- “Your grades have been dropping lately and I am worried about your big project getting done.”

OPTION 3

Structure: Group brainstorming and discussion

Method:

1. Distribute the *Talking to Others* handouts.
2. Define communication (verbal, non-verbal).
3. Explain there are many ways to express our needs, wants and feelings; and we all use these methods to get our point across.
4. You can have individual students read each of the handouts out loud, or explain the different communication styles:

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- **Aggressive:** “You never let me go out with my friends, whether my homework is done or not!” (Loud voice, threatening body language etc.)
 - **Passive:** “It’s not fair; my friends get to do it. (Quiet voice, whining)
 - **Assertive:** “I’d really like to go out with my friends. I have done my homework and chores for the day. Would that be OK?” (Calm voice, good eye contact, relaxed body)
 - Highlight to students the use of “I Statements” and “You Statements” in the Assertive and Aggressive *Talking to Others* handouts.
5. Divide class into small groups (4-5 students depending on the size of class).
 6. Give each group a method of communication that they will be discussing regarding a chosen scenario. The facilitator selects the method of communication for each group.
 7. Choose one of the following scenarios for the groups to discuss. All groups can work on the same scenario or each group can use different scenarios.
 - You would like to go to a movie with friends, and stay out 30 minutes later than usual. No adults will be with you.
 - You are working on a school project with a classmate, who is not doing their fair share of the work.
 - You would like to go to a party but your parents refuse because they do not know the guests.
 - You are asking for money from your parents to buy something (clothes, video game, etc.) you would really like to have because you have already spent all your allowance.
 - You would like to get a social media account (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) and your parents do not approve.
 - You have a big school project due right after March Break, but you and your family are going away for the break. You will not be able to get the project done in time.
 - You would really like to get a new cell phone, but your parents say they think you are too young to have one.
 - You worked hard on a project and after it is graded, you are disappointed with the mark. You discuss your grade with your teacher.
 8. Give groups 5-10 minutes to discuss the scenario and answer the following questions. Each group will be asked to present back to the class. (Write these questions on the board so students can refer to them while working in groups):
 - Would this method work? (Help you get you what you want?)
 - What would be some of the consequences of using this approach?
 - How would you feel? How would the other person feel?
 - Would you describe this method as assertive, aggressive or passive (or a mixture of two?)
 9. Have one member of each group present the group’s answers and discuss with the entire class, if time allows.

Methods of Communication (For use with option 3)

Whining, pointing out how unfair the situation is	Threatening/getting angry
Pleading, begging	Having a temper tantrum
Not being direct, giving big hints	Not saying anything but making sure they know you're upset (silent treatment)
Making the other person feel guilty	Sucking up
Repeating the same request over & over (pestering)	Negotiate & compromise
Be honest, stating your case, expressing what is important to you, and paying attention to the other person's concerns	State in a direct way what you want and speak in a calm voice

Methods of Communication (For use with option 3)

Answer Key

Whining, pointing out how unfair the situation is

Method of communication: Passive/Aggressive

Pleading, begging

Method of communication: Passive

Not being direct, giving big hints

Method of communication: Passive

Making the other person feel guilty

Method of communication: Aggressive

Repeating the same request over & over (pestering)

Method of communication: Aggressive

Be honest, stating your case, expressing what is important to you, and paying attention to the other person's concerns

Method of communication: Assertive

Threatening/getting angry

Method of communication: Aggressive

Having a temper tantrum

Method of communication: Aggressive

Not saying anything but making sure they know you're upset (silent treatment)

Method of communication: Passive

Sucking up

Method of communication: Passive

Negotiate & compromise

Method of communication: Assertive

State in a direct way what you want and speak in a calm voice

Method of communication: Assertive



Important Key Messages:

1. Assertive communication takes practice.
2. While assertiveness may not always get you what you want (others always have the right to say no); it offers a good chance of success, and helps to build or keep positive relationships. Other methods may get people what they want in the short term, but can create problems in the future.
3. There are times when a passive or a verbally aggressive response may be the best choice. Ask students to identify such situations. (For example, you may choose to be quiet and wait to discuss things later when the other person is in a bad mood; this is passive. An aggressive response would be appropriate if you are in a risky or dangerous situation and you need to get out right away (“Get away from me now!”, or “Leave me alone!”)
4. Discuss the *Listening Well* handout.

Listening well

I am really listening if I:

- ✓ Listen without interrupting.
- ✓ Rephrase what the person just said to make sure that I understand them. (Reflective listening can also help you slow down a bit if you are upset.)
- ✓ Use conversation encouragers (“Really?” “That’s great”).
- ✓ Send positive non-verbal messages (e.g. nodding head, turned toward person, leaning toward person, facial expressions, looking at person).
- ✓ Put down the cell phone or other electronic devices.

I am NOT really listening if I:

- ✓ Send negative non-verbal messages (e.g. turn away from the speaker, constantly look away or look for something else, do something else)
- ✓ Interrupt
- ✓ Listen only to figure out what to say next (like during an argument).
- ✓ Pay attention to other things happening nearby.
- ✓ Play on the phone or other electronic devices.

Talking to others: aggressive

you say...

- What you want, think and feel in an angry and threatening way.
- "You-statements" like... "You never take my side!"

you think...

- They're wrong and I'm right!
- They're trying to make me mad!

you feel...



- Angry;
- Out of control;
- Maybe guilty afterward.



Results...

- You may get what you want, but you can lose friends and damage relationships;
- Others don't really want to listen to you, because they know it will end up in a fight;
- You can lose the respect of others;
- People may be reluctant to be honest with you and say how they really feel, so they can avoid arguing with you.

Works when...

You're in a risky situation, and you need to get out fast!
"Leave me alone!"



Talking to others: passive

you don't say... What you want, think or feel.

- You may try to get your message out without having to actually speak out (like talking about others behind their backs).
- Sometimes you don't say anything, even when you have something to say.

you think...

- They should know how I would feel about this.
- They'll be angry if I say what's on my mind.

you feel...

- They won't like me if I say what's on my mind
- Frustrated.
- Resentful
- Used

Results...

- You don't get what you want and you may feel used.
- You may get pushed around.
- Frustration may build up inside.
- Others begin to forget you have an opinion.
- Problems don't get solved.

Works when....

It may sometimes be a good idea to avoid conflict. It may be a risky situation, or you may decide to wait for a better time (maybe the person you need to speak to is in a bad mood, or is dealing with another problem). Waiting a day or two can also give you a chance to calm down and think about how you want to handle things.



Talking to others: assertive

you say...

- What you want, think and feel in an open and direct way.
- "I-statements" like... "I think...I feel...I'd like...I need...I believe..." "It hurt my feelings when you said that".

you think...

- About the other person's point of view.
- About the best time to talk about something.
- Ahead of time about possible solutions or compromises.
- "I can accept his point of view, even though I don't agree. I can take 'no' for an answer, everyone has the right to say 'no'."

you feel...

- In control
- Calm
- Good about sticking up for yourself in a positive way.

Results...

- Others are more willing to listen.
- You increase your chances of being heard, and getting what you want or need.
- You'll earn the respect of others.
- You may not always get what you want, but you keep good relationships with your friends, parents and teachers.

Works when...

Good for almost any situation. Especially good for working out a problem.



Listening Well

This list will help you to check to see how well you (and others!) are listening.

I'm really listening if I:

- Listen without interrupting
- Rephrase what the person just said to make sure that I understand them (reflective listening-this can also help you slow down a bit if you're upset)
- Use conversation encouragers ("Really?" "That's great!")
- Send positive non-verbal messages (nodding head, turned toward person, leaning toward person, facial expressions, looking at person)
 - Put down my cell phone or other electronic devices

I'm NOT really listening if I:

- Send negative non-verbal messages (turn away from the speaker, constantly look away or look for something else, do something else)
- Interrupt
- Listen only to figure out what to say next (like during an argument)
- Pay attention to other things happening nearby
 - Am playing on my phone or other electronic devices





10 min.

True/False Activity

Objective:

Students will recall major concepts learned in previous sessions.

Structure: Large group activity

Method:

Divide the classroom into two sides - 'true' side and 'false' side. Explain that you will be reading out statements, and that students will have to decide if the statement is true or false. If they believe the statement is true, they move to the 'true' side; and vice versa, if they feel the statement is false. Ask students to explain their choices and provide a brief clarification of the statement after students respond. You can do this by reviewing the info provided after each statement with the group, or ask students leading questions to come up with similar conclusions.

1. We have some control over our mental health.

True.

Although we can't always control what happens to us, we have some control over how we react. Sometimes changing the way we think about things can help. At other times, though, our feelings are so overwhelming and painful that we need to talk to others for help and support. This is another really important way we can prevent our struggles from turning into more serious problems.

2. All stress is bad.

False.

Stress is a normal part of everyday life and affects everyone. Stress is what you feel when you are worried or uncomfortable about something. Stress can be anything that threatens us, challenges us, or scares us. Some stress in our lives is necessary to help keep us alert and energized, and to help us get things done. For example, preparing for a test or a hockey game.

3. Sometimes we need more than one person to help us when we are struggling.

True.

At some point in each of our lives, we all need some help from others when we are struggling. People we can talk to include parents or family members, friends that you trust, or adults in your community like teachers and coaches. Sometimes we need professional help from doctors or therapists. The important thing to remember is to reach out for help.

4. The way we talk and listen has a big impact on our relationships.

True.

Listening attentively to others gives the message that we care about them, and that what they say is important to us. Being assertive can help you work out every day conflicts without damaging relationships. Being assertive also tells others that we will stick up for ourselves, so that we earn respect.

5. You shouldn't express your feelings when you are feeling upset.

False.

No matter how you feel – good or bad – it's healthy to put your feelings into words (“I feel sad”, or “I am frustrated”). Identifying your emotions and understanding possible reasons for the feelings can help you manage those feelings in a more positive way (e.g. taking deep breaths, exercising, talking to someone).

6. Talking to ourselves in a positive way can help us to get through life's struggles.

True.

This does take practice, though. Trying to use more positive self-talk when we're faced with a tough situation can help us work through the problem. For example, if you fail a test instead of telling yourself that you're stupid, remind yourself that you just did badly on a test. If you've done badly on a test, what can you do? You can study more, ask to re-take the test or get the help you need to understand the material.

7. Being a good friend can sometimes mean breaking a confidence to make sure a friend gets help.

True.

Sometimes friends tell you how badly they are feeling. They may be hurting themselves, or thinking about hurting themselves or even have thoughts of suicide. It is really important to share this information with an adult you trust. A friend in this situation needs help – too much help for a friend to be expected to give alone. That's what being a Newfoundland dog is all about. When friends are struggling, they can't always see the best way out.

8. Too much screen time doesn't interfere with a healthy lifestyle.

False.

Using tablets, computers and playing video games are examples of screen time. You may use screens for schoolwork and that's okay. Too much time spent in front of a screen can not only affect your vision but also your ability to be better in school. Spending less time on your screen can improve self-confidence, improve fitness, maintain a healthy body weight, and have more fun with friends.

9. One of the best things you can learn when you are facing a challenge is how to make a positive out of a negative.

True.

Your mindset is your biggest tool. Being a positive thinker helps you move past a challenge easily.

A positive thinker:

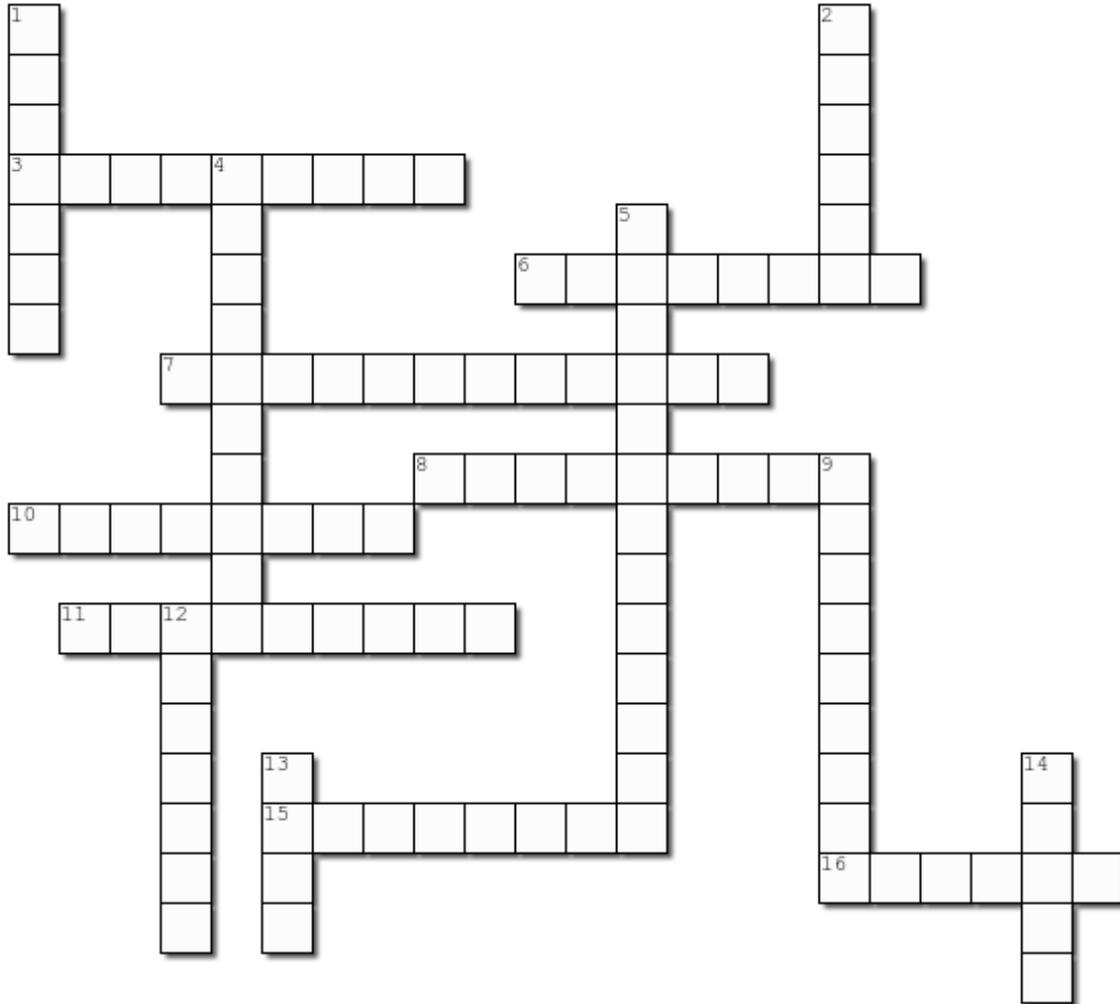
- knows life isn't perfect.
- is realistic but confident they can find an answer to their problem.
- is able to have a setback, not feel overwhelmed by it, but be ready to try something new.

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Name: _____

Complete the crossword puzzle below using the clues provided.



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

3. There are many different ways of looking at the same _____. Clarifying what you've heard is important.
6. Who experiences emotional pain?
7. Refer to your _____ dogs to remind you of the people in your life you can turn to when things get rough.
8. Just as we would get help for a physical illness or injury, we need to get help for _____ pain.
10. Don't be ashamed to have _____; everyone has them – good or bad.
11. Which method of communication is the best?
15. We feel different _____ all day long, as different things happen to us.
16. Excessive time spent on screens could lead to lower _____ and school performance.

Down

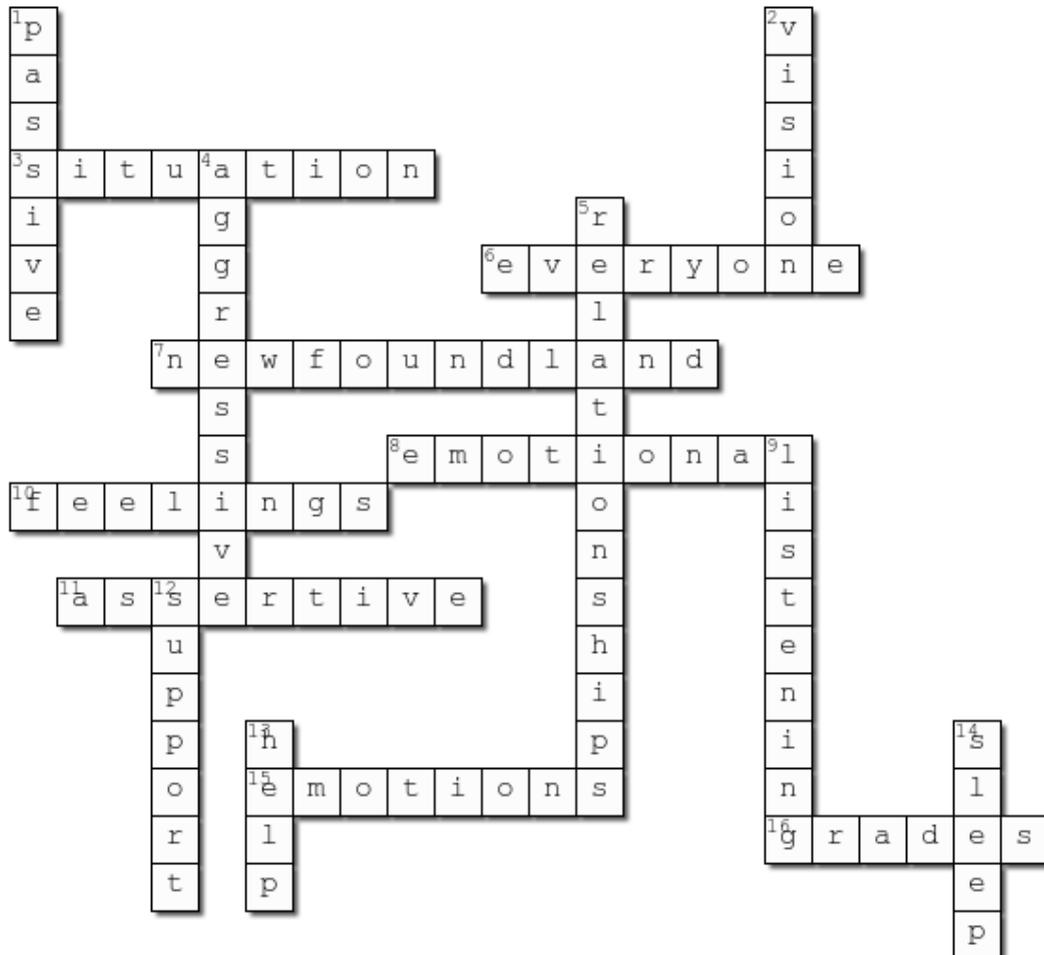
1. This method of communication is recommended when you want to avoid conflict by giving the person sometime to calm down.
2. Too much time spent in front of a screen can affect your _____.
4. This method of communication is recommended when you are in a risky situation and need to get out fast.
5. Using "I statements" promotes good _____ and emotional well being in ourselves and others.
9. Putting your phone down lets the other person know that you are _____.
12. Sometimes we need more than one person to _____ us through tough times.
13. When emotional pain becomes overwhelming it is really important to get _____.
14. Screens before bedtime can interfere with _____.

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Name: _____

Complete the crossword puzzle below using the clues provided.



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

3. There are many different ways of looking at the same _____. Clarifying what you've heard is important. (**situation**)
6. Who experiences emotional pain? (**everyone**)
7. Refer to your _____ dogs to remind you of the people in your life you can turn to when things get rough. (**newfoundland**)
8. Just as we would get help for a physical illness or injury, we need to get help for _____ pain. (**emotional**)
10. Don't be ashamed to have _____. Everyone has them – good or bad. (**feelings**)
11. Which method of communication is the best? (**assertive**)
15. We feel different _____ all day long, as different things happen to us. (**emotions**)
16. Excessive time spent on screens could lead to lower _____ and school performance. (**grades**)

Down

1. This method of communication is recommended when you want to avoid conflict by giving the person sometime to calm down. (**passive**)
2. Too much time spent in front of a screen can affect your _____. (**vision**)
4. This method of communication is recommended when you are in a risky situation and need to get out fast. (**aggressive**)
5. Using "I statements" promotes good _____ and emotional well being in ourselves and others. (**relationships**)
9. Putting your phone down lets the other person know that you are _____. (**listening**)
12. Sometimes we need more than one person to _____ us through tough times. (**support**)
13. When emotional pain becomes overwhelming it is really important to get _____. (**help**)
14. Screens before bedtime can interfere with _____. (**sleep**)