**Eliminating Passive Aggressiveness**

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What is passive aggressiveness?   
I act in a passive aggressive way when I:  
\* hide my hostility by seeming to be nice to someone I dislike, and am unable to be honest with the person.  
\* say I agree with something but don't follow through because I really don't agree with it.  
\* act opposite to what others are expecting.  
\* quietly manipulate to get my own way after voicing a completely different opinion, just to keep the peace.  
\* seek revenge by agreeing and looking "good,'' but never following through on my promises.  
\* tell people what they want to hear, even if I don't believe in what I am saying.  
\* try to please people by agreeing to their plan of action, yet actually doing the opposite.  
\* act one way, which is true to my inner feelings, yet say another.  
\* am out of touch with my inner feelings; the only way to know how I feel about something is to observe my behavior, don't trust my words.  
\* hate something or someone but am afraid of letting my true feelings show.  
\* feel pressured to act or believe in a certain way when I really don't want to.  
\* avoid conflict at all cost by giving in to others, then procrastinate and never do what I agreed to do.  
\* am angry but afraid to show my anger, so I quietly take my revenge by doing the opposite.  
  
What are the typical reactions to my passive aggressiveness?   
When people recognize my passive aggressiveness they:  
\* are surprised.  
\* get disappointed.  
\* get angry.  
\* are confused by my behavior.  
\* confront me on my actions.  
\* realize that I lied to them.  
\* get frustrated by the inconsistency in my behavior.  
\* begin to do battle with me, resulting in a conflict greater than the one I originally tried to avoid.  
\* get upset and fly into a rage and this damages the relationship.  
\* no longer trust me.  
\* resent me for being dishonest.  
\* act in a similar way with me and our communication winds up at a standstill where neither of us "wins.''  
\* feel challenged by me and in their competitive reaction become more adamant in seeking to achieve what I had originally verbally agreed to with them.   
  
What irrational thinking keeps me being passive aggressive when I disagree with others?   
\* I must avoid an argument, fight or conflict at all costs.  
\* I never "win'' in confrontation.  
\* There is no use in opposing them, they are much more powerful than I am.  
\* I must please people by telling them what they want to hear.  
\* I never get anywhere by showing my anger openly.  
\* It's bad to get angry.  
\* No one wants to know how I feel.  
\* No one will understand how I feel.  
\* My problems are unique; I need to hide them since no one would understand.  
\* I am a loser and failure anyway; why try to defend my position?  
\* I will never "win'' in this situation; why try?  
\* I enjoy seeing people get blown away by my agreeing with them and then my doing the opposite of what I agreed to do.  
\* I'd rather back down right away to minimize the damages a fight could bring rather than tell people how I really feel about things.  
\* It's so hard to be honest with people about how I feel when what I feel is counter to what they want me to feel.  
\* It's important for people to like and accept me and I say anything just so long as they like me.  
\* It's not what I do or how I act that is important to people, it is what I say that influences them.  
\* People will never know I'm angry and disagree with them.  
\* I hide my feelings well from others.  
\* Feelings don't count. It is better to deny my feelings than upset another person I am in disagreement with.  
\* I'd rather lie than get into an argument with someone.  
\* If I lie about how I feel, others will never know the truth.   
  
How can I recognize when someone is being passive aggressive with me?   
I can tell that people are being passive aggressive with me when they:  
\* always agree with my point of view, even when I am being narrow minded or blind to other alternatives.  
\* never disagree or argue with my point of view.  
\* take every opportunity to "put me down'' in a humorous or sarcastic way.  
\* never confront me with their negative feelings.  
\* avoid discussions about unpleasant topics.  
\* are always cheerful and upbeat to my face; yet I hear from others how negative they are about me behind my back.  
\* "yes'' me constantly, never disagreeing with anything I say.  
\* consistently do the opposite of what I thought they agreed to do.  
\* withdraw or pull away from me whenever I confront them with my anger or negative feelings about them.  
\* deny that they have any problems with our relationship.  
\* talk about others in a negative or disparaging way, yet are nice and friendly to their faces.  
\* demonstrate behavior inconsistent with their words.  
\* make me feel foolish for expecting one thing from them when they deliver the opposite.  
\* make me believe I can count on them to do something for me but they never follow through.  
\* talk with fantasy and magical thinking about how they are going to change, yet the change never occurs.  
\* show a consistent pattern of exerting no effort toward improving our relationship.  
\* talk or act irrationally in dealing with a problem, as if it were very easy to overcome and correct.  
\* minimize the extent of the problems facing us in our relationship.  
\* tend to patronize me and try to make me believe that I am just imagining problems between us.  
\* continue to deny that a problem exists when all the evidence points to the opposite.  
  
How can I confront a passive aggressive person?   
If others are being passive aggressive with me I can:  
\* point out the behavior that indicates passive aggressiveness on their part.  
\* point out the inconsistency between their words and actions.  
\* pay attention to their actions rather than their words, then give them feedback as to what their actions tell me about their feelings.  
\* ask for their true feelings reassuring them that there are no right or wrong feelings, and that it is OK to share negative feelings.  
\* ask them what has them so intimidated that they fear sharing their feelings with me.  
\* reassure them that we can reach a "win-win'' solution in our communication if we are willing to compromise.  
\* defuse the competition in our relationship. It doesn't matter "what'' we are discussing as long as we respect how each of us "feels'' about what we are discussing.  
\* remain open to any negative feelings they have and let them know this.  
\* begin to trust what they "do'' rather than what they "say'' and let them know that I am doing this.  
\* make myself more accessible to them.  
\* help them lessen their fear of rejection from me by reassuring them that I really do care.   
  
If I find myself being passive aggressive, how can I correct this?   
To avoid being passive aggressive with others, I can:  
\* try to be assertive, open and honest with my negative feelings or anger.  
\* warn people to "read'' my behavior rather than my words if they want to know my feelings.  
\* confront myself with my inconsistent behavior and challenge myself to explain it.  
\* take the risk to confront my anger assertively and "on the spot'' so that I can bring my behavior in line with my feelings.  
\* work at making my behavior consistent with my feelings.  
\* change the way I interact with people and make my relationships more honest.  
\* admit that I have been a liar.  
\* work at being more honest with people even if it results in a conflict.  
\* identify the irrational thinking that prevents me from confronting people when I am angry.  
\* learn how to become assertive with my negative feelings.  
\* accept that it is OK to have conflict and disagreement.  
\* learn to compromise and come to a "win-win'' solution.   
  
Why is it useful to eliminate my acting passive aggressive?   
By eliminating passive aggressiveness when I am angry, I could:  
\* have deeper, more honest and longer-lasting relationships.  
\* feel less stress, anxiety and depression in my dealings with others.  
\* learn to be clear and consistent about my feelings.  
\* reassure others that they will no longer have to guess how I "really feel.''  
\* stop resorting to lies about my feelings.  
\* develop self-respect, self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.  
\* have more energy because I would no longer be defending myself from powerful, intimidating people.  
\* have clarity of focus and purpose, working on the things I want rather than what others want for me.  
\* have fewer people venting their rage on me.  
\* experience a sense of harmony in my life.   
  
Steps to eliminating being passive aggressive   
Step 1: First, I must begin to recognize this behavior when it occurs. To do this, I will answer the following questions in my journal:  
A. What is my usual response when I disagree with someone who intimidates me?  
B. How do I feel when I am angry or upset with someone who intimidates me?  
C. How often do I agree with these people rather than confront them just to avoid conflict?  
D. What benefits do I derive by avoiding confrontation?  
E. What are my feelings after I have backed down from someone who intimidates me?  
F. From whom have I backed down? How successful was this? How often did I go ahead with what I had planned, ignoring what these people wanted me to do? What usually resulted from my failure to follow through with my part of the plan?  
G. What do I do now after I've backed down from a disagreement? Am I still passive aggressive? How can I tell? What are the results? How often does this happen?  
H. Under what circumstances do I resort to passive aggressiveness?  
I. What is involved in these situations? Why do I resort to passive aggressiveness?  
J. What are the negative results of my passive aggressiveness?  
Step 2: If I find that I am resorting to passive aggressiveness, then I need help to recognize the negative impact it has in my life. To do this I will record the following exercise in my journal.  
My Passive Aggressive Ways  
Write a story about five separate incidents during which I acted passive aggressive. In each story, detail:  
\* When it happened.  
\* With whom it happened.  
\* What I was angry about or over what we disagreed.  
\* Why I was intimidated.  
\* What I did later to show I was being passive aggressive.  
\* The reasons I acted the way I did.  
\* How others reacted to my passive aggressive behaviors.  
\* How others confronted me on how I was acting.  
\* What they told me about my behavior and how they felt about it.  
\* The final outcome of the situation.   
Step 3: I am now ready to confront my past passive aggressiveness and ways I could change it. Complete the following exercise:  
The Other Side of the Story  
Write a sequel to each of the five stories from Step 2. In each sequel include:  
\* What I did differently when I first recognized that I was angry or had negative feelings.  
\* How I honestly confronted my feelings as being different from my behavior.  
\* How I made sure that my actions were consistent with my expressed feelings.  
\* How I gave others permission to "call me on it'' if I deviated from my expressed feelings.  
\* How others handle my being assertive with my anger and/or negative feelings.  
\* How we resolved the conflict or disagreement that resulted.  
\* The impact this confrontation had on our relationship.  
\* How the stress and anxiety of intimidation and power games was eliminated from our relationship.  
\* How I felt about learning to handle my anger and/or disagreements in a healthy way.  
\* The benefits of my being direct and assertive in confronting my anger and/or negative feelings with others.   
Step 4: Once I've been able to rewrite my passive aggressive behavioral script, I need to apply it. Whenever I am angry or in disagreement with someone, I will strive to follow these tips:  
Tips to Overcoming being Passive Aggressive  
Tip 1: Tell the person immediately how I am feeling, even if I am angry or in disagreement.  
Tip 2: Allow the other to express feelings openly as well.  
Tip 3: Ask the other to allow for a compromise "win-win'' solution.  
Tip 4: Ventilate feelings, then jointly brainstorm solutions.  
Tip 5: Arrive at a solution in which we both "win.''  
Tip 6: Act on solutions in which we both "win."  
Tip 7: Make sure my actions are consistent with the agreement.  
Tip 8: Make sure my behavior is consistent with my feelings and what I said in the agreement.  
Tip 9: Give the other person permission to point out when my behavior deviates from our agreement.  
Tip 10: Monitor my emotions and renegotiate our solution if they aren't consistent with our compromise.  
Tip 11: Let the other know if I get upset over the compromise with no masking of my feelings.  
Tip 12: Confront intimidation openly and honestly.  
Tip 13: Ensure that our relationship is based on honesty.  
Tip 14: Accept the uniqueness and individuality of others, allowing each of us to be ourselves.  
Step 5: If I find I am still resorting to passive aggressiveness then I need to return to Step 1, and begin again

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