

Reactions to Defensive and Supportive Communication

Project yourself into each situation below and imagine how you would react. Choose a number for each situation that reflects how much you would like or dislike the statements presented.

Using a 5-point scale (5, 4, 3, 2, 1) from Strongly **dislike** (5) to Strongly **like** (1) choose the appropriate number for you, and mark in the blanks where indicated.

1. You live with two roommates in an apartment. You forgot to clean your dishes twice this week. One of your roommates says to you, "Do your dishes. I'm tired of cleaning up your mess."

2. You're working with your team on a group project. One member says to the group, "I'm feeling very concerned that we will not finish our project in time. We're about halfway and we only have two days before our presentation. What do the rest of you think?"

3. You are a member of a softball team. Your coach says to you in front of the team, "You blew the game last week. Are you prepared to do better this game?"

4. At work, you tripped and badly bruised your shoulder. Your boss says to you, "I heard that you injured yourself yesterday. Do you need time off? That must really hurt. Can I do anything to make you more comfortable while you work in your office?" _____

5. Your support group meets once a week to share experiences and solve personal problems. The group facilitator announces to the group, "We haven't got time to hear from (your name). We have more important things to consider."

6. During a group problem-solving session, one member says to the group, "I have a suggestion that might solve our problem. Perhaps this will move us forward."

7. You are a member of the student senate. During discussion on a controversial campus problem, the senate president says to the group, "We're obviously divided on this issue. Because I'm the president of this body, I'll have to make the final decision."

8. During a dorm council meeting, one member says to the council, "I know we all have strong feelings on this issue, but let's put our heads together and see if we can find a solution everyone can support. Does anyone have ideas they wish to share with the group?"

9. During a heated group discussion with fellow classmates, one group member says, "I know I'm right and there's no way any of you will convince me that I'm wrong."

10. Your class project group approaches your teacher and proposes an idea that your teacher initially dislikes. She says to your group, "I can see that you really like this idea, but it doesn't satisfy the requirements of the project. I suggest that you keep brainstorming." _____

11. You're a member of a hiring panel. During a break from an interviewing session, one member of the panel takes you aside and says, "Look, I want you to support my candidate."

We've been friends a long time. This is important to me. Whaddaya say? Can I count on you to back me up?"

12. You've been asked to work on a committee to solve the parking problem on campus. The chair addresses the committee: "It is my hope that this committee can come to a consensus on solutions to this parking problem. I'll conduct our meetings, but I only have one vote, the same as everyone else."

Answers 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 are defensive communication (control, criticism, indifference, superiority, certainty, and manipulation—in that order); 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 are supportive communication (description, empathy, provisionalism, problem orientation, assertiveness, and equality—in that order). Find your average score for each set (divide by six both the sum of the odd-numbered items and the sum of the even-numbered items). Which do you like best (lower average score)—defensive or supportive communication? Which least?