



## Conflict Management Styles: Passive

The current three newsletter articles cover different ways to approach conflict or disagreement. As always, the purpose of these materials is to build awareness and skills that help reduce the stress of difficult situations.

Interpersonal conflict is inevitable, where the parties in the conflict want different outcomes, and will typically use different methods to try to get the outcome they want. Broadly speaking, there are three styles of conflict management, each with benefits and costs: Aversive, Passive, and Assertive. This article describes the **passive style**, where one deals with conflict by avoidance. Being PASSIVE means that I...

1. Ignore it, hoping it will go away, or someone else will address it
2. “Don’t make waves”
3. Appear to agree with anybody who seems stronger or scarier than me
4. Always put others’ needs and wants ahead of my own
5. Gripe about problems just for griping’s sake, and not to solve anything
6. Let myself down by not standing up for what’s important to me
7. Keep all my hurts, wants, and needs to myself
8. Make myself invisible

The “benefits” of being PASSIVE include avoiding pain, avoiding others’ anger, expending less effort, many people appear to like me, I get to blame others for what’s wrong, and I get to sulk! The costs of being PASSIVE including feeling like a doormat, attracting users and bullies into my life, not solving problems, losing self-respect, and erupting at times in rages that are larger than called for by circumstances. Conflict avoidance (passivity) makes sense sometimes, but it’s usually self-defeating as a long-term strategy.

**Homework:** This month, challenge yourself to recognize the **passive conflict management style** in yourself or others. Notice what triggers the use of this style, and its impact on problem solving, interpersonal relationships, and your stress level.

Adapted from Marsha Linehan, PhD, author of “DBT Skills Training Manual.”