



Finding Peaceful Power in Interpersonal Interactions

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“Leadership is about influence through persuasion.”
 --Timothy R. Clark, Ph.D., *The Leadership Test*

Every interaction invites us to respond with different energy at different “decibels.” Equus Coaching can help us develop the presence, awareness, and self-confidence to meet every individual exactly where they are in this moment, skillfully navigating along the submissive-to-aggressive continuum.

When considering your interpersonal relationships, ask yourself: How do I show up on this continuum most often, and why? In what relationships do I most often show up calmly and assertively (the “sweet middle”)? In which situations do I swing to the other extremes? What are the habits of thought that might push me toward submission or aggression? Playing with this continuum can help us learn to notice and calibrate our leadership energy, moment by moment, case by case.

SUBMISSIVE	ASSERTIVE The “sweet middle”	AGGRESSIVE
Manipulation	Persuasion	Coercion
Ingratiate	Co-create, advocate	Dictate / Dominate
Hedge and hide	Engage and explore	Confront and demand
May react too late or avoid interacting at all	Appropriate reaction	May react too soon, even start the conflict
Energy is too small	“Just right” energy: use what you need, when you need it. “Soft as possible, firm as needed.”	Energy is too big
Mistrust self	Trust self...and the relationship	Mistrust other
Focus on self	Focus on “we”	Focus on fearing other’s power and preserving own safety
A form of flight: the reptilian brain	Trust activates neocortex	Fear of other’s power activates Amygdala and Limbic System

Thanks to Carolyn Hax, Judith Glaser, Timothy Clark



Are you assertive? (Assertiveness = the ability to stand up for your rights without denying the rights of others.) Options for Avoiding Assault, by Mary Tesoro, SDE News, 1994

1. Do you have a submissive attitude?

- a. Do you hesitate to express your desires and needs?
- b. Do you hope others will just guess what you want and be nice to you?
- c. Do you refrain from expressing what is okay with you and what is not?
- d. Do you tend to deny or ignore aggressive and confrontive behavior because you don't want others to become upset with you?
- e. Do you try to "keep the peace" at any cost, even when it involves emotional or physical pain to you?

2. Do you have an assertive attitude?

- a. Do you express your own feelings and boundaries?
- b. Do you give clear messages about your needs and desires by articulating them when necessary and appropriate?
- c. Do you acknowledge aggressive behavior and act to protect your boundaries?
- d. Do you understand that you're not responsible for others' behavior and that you don't need to take care of them when it hurts or violates you?
- e. Do you focus on internal power rather than overpowering others?

3. Do you have an aggressive attitude?

- a. Do you lack respect for other people's boundaries?
- b. Do you think it's okay to use force or manipulation to get what you want or need?
- c. Do you use overly strong or inappropriate behavior and words to set boundaries?
- d. Do you think others are responsible for your desires and needs?
- e. Do you try to gain "power over" others as a way to feel powerful or good about yourself?

"Boundaries are invisible and symbolic fences that keep people from coming into our space and abusing us." --Pia Mellody.

(They also keep us from invading the personal space of others—EBH)

"Healthy boundaries are not walls. They are flexible, permeable, ever-changing." --Mary Tesoro

Welcome to the herd.