Passive Aggressive Behavior: Sources and Solutions for Library Workspaces

LibraryWorks

Carrie Rogers-Whitehead https://rogers-whitehead.com

What we are covering

- What is Passive Aggressive Behavior?
- What causes Passive Aggressive Behavior?
- Reframing conflict and anger

- Gender & passive Aggressive
 behavior
- Setting Boundaries
- Enabling
- Q&A and Resources

Passive Aggressive Behavior is an adaptive response to a maladaptive situation.



What is passive aggressive behavior?

Passive Aggressive behavior does not make you a bad person

A coping mechanism and/or (mal)adaptive response Way to express feelings in a way that SEEMS nonhostile

A survival mechanism

Communication styles



AGGRESSIVE-blustering and bullying, insults, reactive and threatening, they snap easily, overbearing domineering, winning is everything to these individuals



PASSIVE- are not good at expressing their needs or opinions, apologetic, retiring, concerned with pleasing people



PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE- passive communicators may be unaware of their statements and the effect they have, mutterers, their words say one thing and expression says another, frequently sarcastic



ASSERTIVE- direct and clear, constructive and collaborative, nonreactive and respectful, good listeners

Anger, aggression and assertiveness

- These three words are lumped together but are different. However, they all involve a "no."
- Assertiveness is the acting of making a stance with confidence
- Aggression is directly confrontational behavior. You can be aggressive without being angry and vice versa.
- Anger is the emotion generated by feeling passionate about an issue and making a stance



Examples of passive aggressive behavior

Never Say NO or Always say YES	Heavily Sarcastic	Negative Outlook
Inaction/stalling	Frustrated and Irritable	Chronic Feelings of Victimhood
Withholding praise	Speaking behind someone's back	Acts of revenge

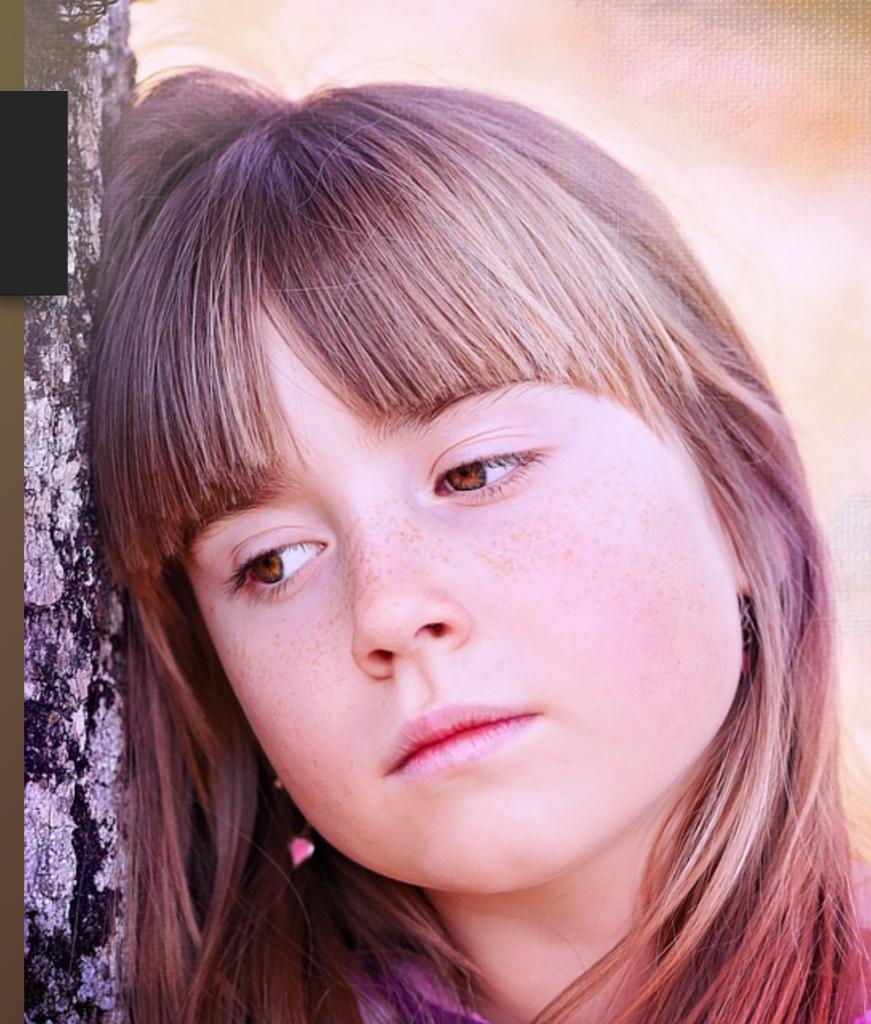


What causes passive aggressive behavior?

From childhood to the workplace

Influences in childhood

- One caregiver dominates
- Influences of older siblings, friends & others
- Unrealistic standards from parents and others
- Childhood abuse
- High conflict or conflict avoidant household
- Authoritarian upbringing, through family or societal structure



CULTURE: Studies show that cultures that value group vs. individual values can influence passive aggressive behaviors. RELIGION: Growing up in an authoritarian or rigid religion can increase passive aggressive behavior CULTURE/ETHNICITY: Children who are taught to be submissive to elders and not express anger can develop passive aggressive behavior

FAMILY: Child abuse, neglect and harsh punishment BIOLOGY: Biological issues such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, ODD, and more

Other influences



Gender & passive aggressive behavior

Why do women exhibit more passive aggressive behavior?

"Researchers found 'significant but very small gender differences' in boy's and girl's expression and experience of emotions, but significant differences in how their emotions were treated by others." FROM AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF CHILDHOOD AND EMOTIONAL **REGULATION:**

--Rage Becomes Her by Soraya Chemaly

"It's okay—even expected—for men to express anger. But when women have a negative emotion, they're expected to express their displeasure with sadness." *Dr. Kerri Johnson, Professor of Communication Studies, UCLA*

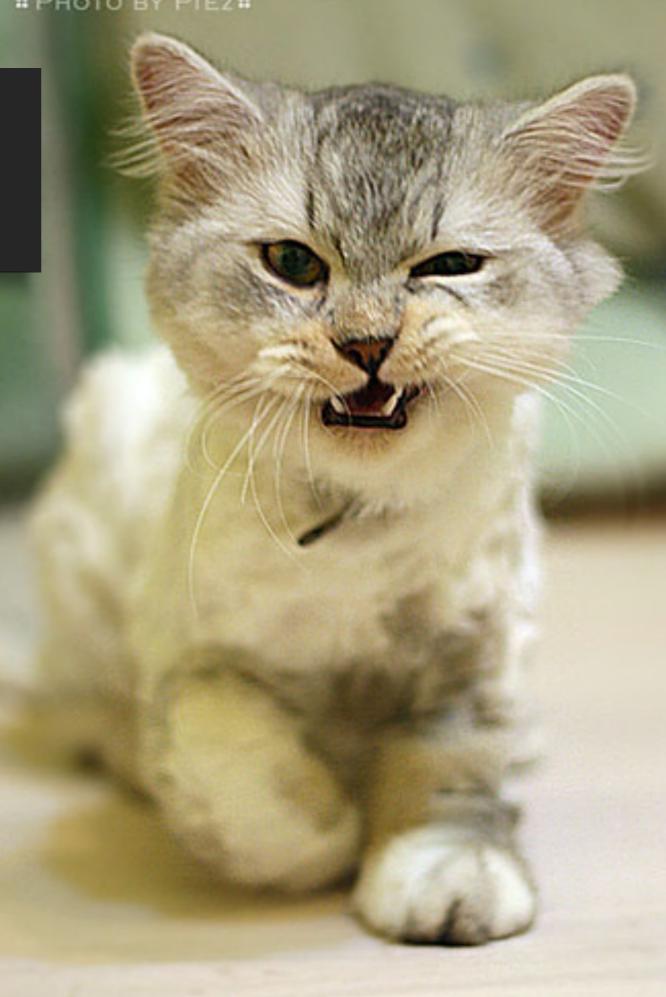
Anger is an "approach" emotion.

Sadness is a "retreat" emotion.

PHOTO BY PIEZ#

Repressing anger hurts us

- Women who repress their anger are 2x as likely to die from heart-related disease
- Women are 3x more likely to develop autoimmune diseases
- People who ruminate on negative feelings instead of expressing causes a higher risk of substance abuse



WOMEN HAVE A **REASON TO BE ANGRY. BUT CAN'T EXPRESS** THAT ANGER.

- Starting at a young age, girls around the world do 30% more unpaid work than their brothers, increasing to 50% during adolescence
- Boys are more likely to be paid for their work at home
- A household with children does not affect a man's sleep, but increases a woman's sleep interruptions by 46%
- In the U.S., 65% of women reported being harassed
- If women's unpaid caregiving were included in the US GDP it would make up between 30-50% of it
- From: Rage Becomes Her by Soraya Chemaly



Reframing Conflict It's OK to be angry

Spurs you to action



Angry people are more optimistic than depressed people

Benefits of Anger



Anger provides self-insight



Anger can help negotiate



Anger can help relationships



Anger inspires and motivates people for behavioral and social change

Setting Boundaries

Boundaries are important in passive aggressive relationships

"Boundaries are the invisible lines that draw our self-identity."

-Andrea Brandt, <u>EIGHT KEYS TO ELIMINATE</u> <u>PASSIVE AGGRESSIVENESS</u>

What are Boundaries?

- Boundaries can be physical, attached to ego or about self-image
- Those who demonstrate passive aggressive behavior typically have weak boundaries and don't respect other people's boundaries
- Those with weak boundaries are easily persuaded



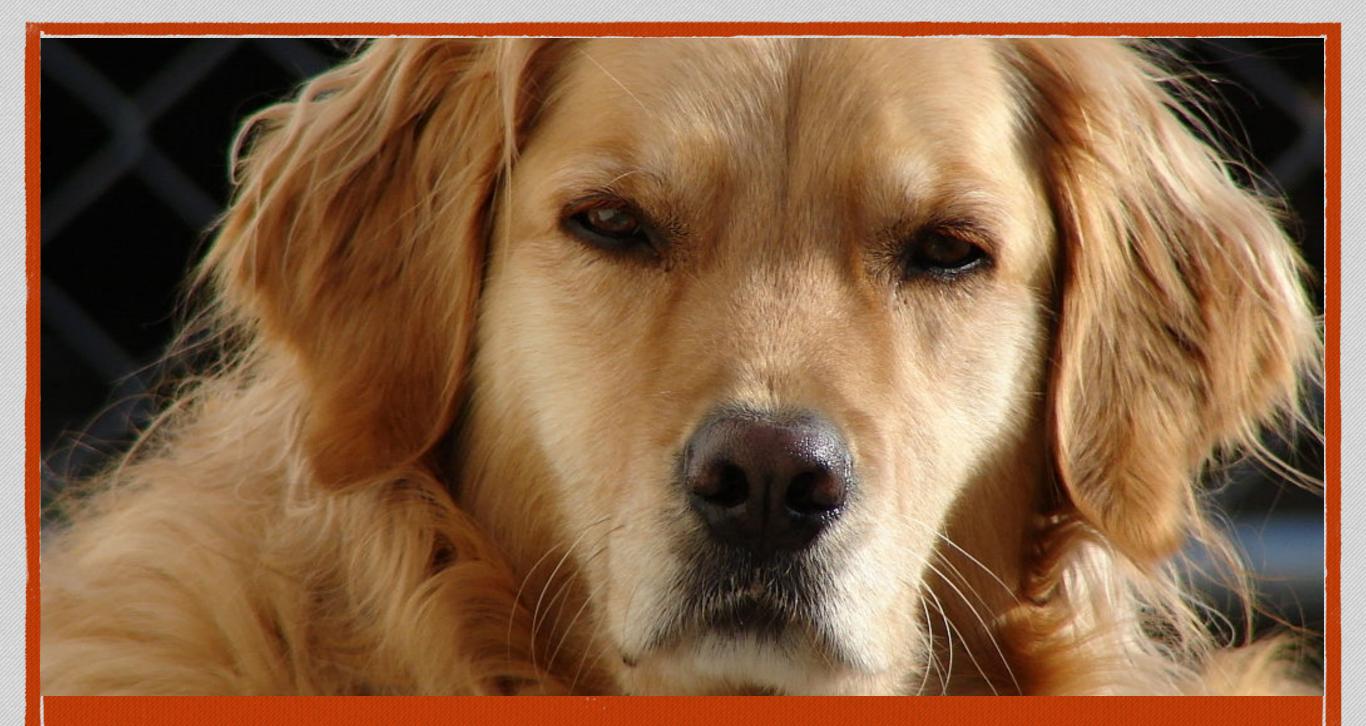
Healthy vs. Weak Boundaries

HEALTHY

- Flexible and adaptive to the person or circumstance
- Ask assertively for what they need and/or say no
- Understand their own needs and feelings
- Can separate their own feelings from other people's feelings
- Don't tolerate any abuse

WEAK

- Boundaries that are rigid, intolerant, black and white and intended to isolate
- Fear that they cannot express their true feelings because they might be abandoned Always say yes, or always say no. Get taken advantage of or take advantage of others



Enabling

Are you encouraging passive aggressive behavior?

Are you an enabler?

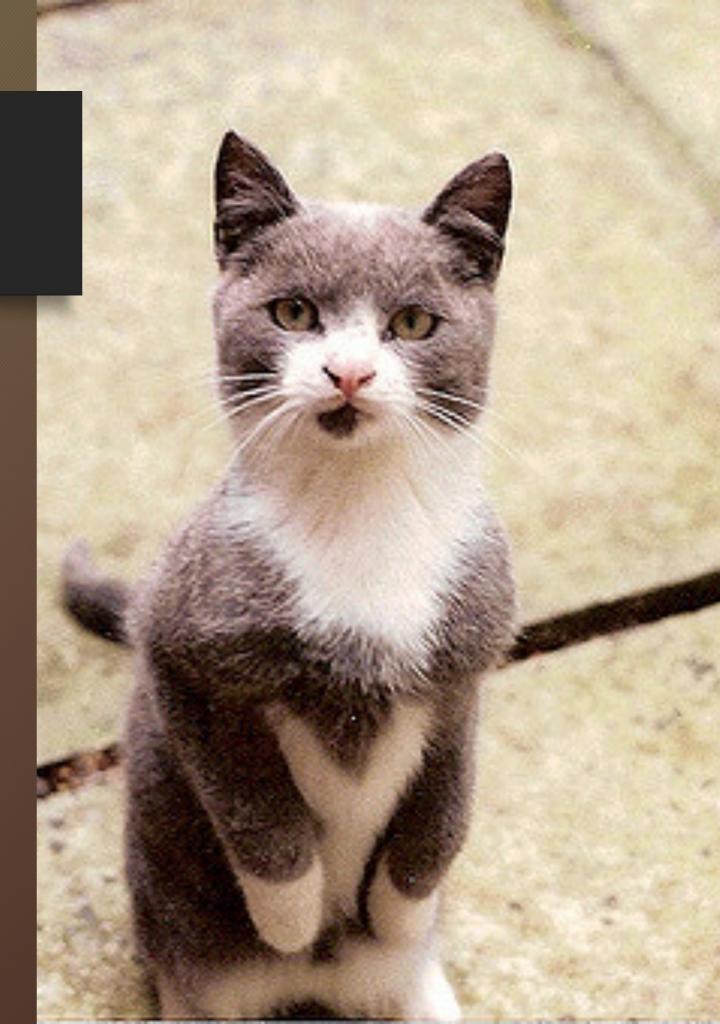
DO YOU?

- Bail the person out of tough circumstances
- Make excuses for their behavior
- •Keep quiet to "keep the peace"
- Have a hard time saying no
- Deny there is a problem with the behavior
- Apologize for things that aren't your fault

Traits of enablers

Can be emotionally needy
Might have grown up in an environment of conflict
Sometimes grew up in homes where they had to be the "fixer" or like "little adults"
Have a need to feel

wanted and indispensable



PLANNING

STRATEGIES

FOR DEALING WITH PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN EMPLOYEES, YOUR BOSSES AND AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Develop a healthy detachment

Set limits

Let others solve their own problems

Try not to take things personally

Take the most compassionate view of when people communicate to you

Develop healthy outlets to release anger. What do you love to do? Hobbies?

Express empathy but do not take ownership of their problem i.e. "That's tough."

Step away with love

If you know you have passive aggressive behavior



What are reasons that you may be demonstrating passive aggressive behavior?



How can I stay optimistic and positive in the fact of adversity?



How can I be more honest and direct with others?

OTHER TIPS FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Think about forgiveness a different way. Our passive aggressive behavior can come from feeling taken advantage of, betrayed, hurt. If we forgive in a way that is self-sacrificial that doesn't help. And forgive nothing unless you are ready, and don't feel shame if you don't.
- Challenge gender binaries. Understand the gender stereotypes involved in how we perceive other's emotional expressions.
- Provide outlets for people to express their feelings at work. Passive aggressiveness can come from feeling humiliated, condescended to, overwork and stress. Is the workplace the problem?

Dealing with a passive aggressive boss

- This is a very difficult situation, if you can get out: do.
- Try to find healthy outlets and safe spaces.
- Document problem behavior, take it to HR if necessary.
- Don't stoop to their level. It legitimizes the passive aggressive behavior.
- Take it one day at a time.



Passive Aggressive Bosses need OVER-Communication

- Clarify everything. "I want to make sure I understand you." "What does a successful outcome look like to you?" "When do you need this due?" etc.
- When calling out behavior, do it in a form of a question. "I noticed in our last meeting you commented about our team's project. Were you joking? I want to make sure we're meeting your goals. "I wasn't sure if you were joking. If you have concerns, can we talk about it?"



Dealing with a passive aggressive employee

- Communicate in writing as much as possible
- Bring witnesses into difficult conversations if possible
- Don't tolerate passive aggressive behavior- call it out
- Be direct in your communication
- Set clear goals during performance evaluations





by Unknown Author is licensed under

Discussion Share your story

Carrie Rogers-Whitehead https://rogers-whitehead.com

Resources

<u>8 Keys to Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness</u> by Andrea Brandt

Living with the Passive-Aggressive Man: Coping with Hidden Aggression from the Boardroom to the Bedroom by Scott Metzler

Bright-sided: How Positive Thinking is Undermining America by Barbara Ehrenreich

"One angry woman: Anger expression increases influence for men, but decreases influence for women, during group deliberation." Salerno, Jessica M.; Peter-Hagene, Liana C. Law and Human Behavior, Vol 39(6), Dec 2015, 581-592.

<u>The Angry Smile: The Psychology of Passive Aggressive Behavior</u> <u>in Families, Schools and Workplaces</u> by Jody and Nicholas Long and Signe Witson

<u>Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger by Soraya</u> Chemaly