

Navigating the Island of Aggression

Lesson 4: Passive Aggression

Key concepts:

- Passive aggression expresses contempt indirectly.
- Non-physical forms of aggression can escalate into physical aggression.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students identify forms of passive aggression.
- Students recognize ways in which non-physical aggression can escalate into physical aggression.

Profile of a Graduate Standards:

- Upper Elementary, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: (5) I identify a problem and propose a solution.
- Middle School, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: (5) I identify a problem and propose a solution.

Materials:

- Slides and digital exit ticket, available at [.peaceliteracy.org/navigation-curricular-materials](https://www.peaceliteracy.org/navigation-curricular-materials)
- Projector or other way to display a digital slideshow

Vocabulary:

- passive aggression
- indirect
- contempt
- escalation

Lesson Procedure:

1. **Show slide 1.** Title Slide
2. **Show slide 2.** Superman cartoon
3. “In our last lesson we talked about social aggression as a non-physical form of hostile aggression. Today we are going to talk about another form of non-physical aggression.
4. **Question** for students:
 - a. What is happening in this cartoon?
 - b. How could this cartoon be showing a form of aggression?”
5. Take a look at this cartoon.

“In the cartoon, Superman’s wife is using an indirect way to show how she feels about him. She sews the word ‘stupid’ onto his outfit. We would call that passive aggression. She is communicating something hurtful without saying it directly.”

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Lesson Procedure, continued:

6. Show slide 3. Passive Aggression

7. “Passive aggression is aggression that is indirect. It is meant to show dislike and disrespect in a roundabout way. Another way of saying ‘dislike and disrespect’ is contempt. Passive aggression is a way of showing contempt indirectly.”

8. Show slide 4. Boy and girl

9. Questions for students:

- a. How does this cartoon show passive, or indirect aggression?
- b. Why do you think the girl in the cartoon responds in the way she does? Why doesn't she let him explain?
- c. Can you think of some other ways to show aggression indirectly? What are some other forms of passive aggression? Possible responses: sarcasm, rolling eyes, ‘the silent treatment’, gossip, backhanded compliments, heavy sighing

10. Show slide 5. Cowboy

11. Show slide 6. Small Toolbox

12. “Aggression is a small toolbox. Passive aggression is the least useful tool in the aggression toolbox, because it almost never communicates clearly what the issue is, and is often misunderstood by the person it is directed toward. Passive aggression is often used when people feel powerless or helpless. There are some situations in which warning aggression or physical aggression can be useful tools. In the rare case that you may be physically threatened, you may need to use some kind of aggression to protect yourself or the people you love. If you were in the forest and were surrounded by wolves, warning aggression might be a very useful tool! But situations in which aggression is the best tool for the job don't happen that often. You can think of aggression as being like a chainsaw. It is a useful tool for cutting through heavy, thick things, but not very good for much else. There is nothing useful you could do in your house or apartment with a chainsaw.”

13. Show slide 7. Horrible Surgeon

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Lesson Procedure, continued:

14. **Question** for students:

- a. If someone was constantly acting in ways that were passive aggressive toward you, would this increase or decrease your trust toward them?
- b. If someone was being socially aggressive toward you, would this increase or decrease your trust toward them?
- c. If someone was physically aggressive toward you, would this increase or decrease your trust toward them?

15. “Aggression is a very limited toolbox. It does not build strong relationships or strong communities. It breaks down shared trust. Learning to see the fires beneath aggression and learning to recognize different forms of aggression gives us the chance to develop new kinds of tools for dealing with aggression.

Having the right tools makes us more effective!”

16. **Show slide 8.** Cartoon of eating soup with fork

Digital exit ticket:

1. What is passive aggression?
2. Name 3 different kinds of passive aggression.
3. Think of at least one reason why aggression is considered a “limited toolbox”?

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Activity 4: Passive Aggression

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Profile of Graduate Standards:

- Upper Elementary, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: (5) I identify a problem and propose a solution.
- Middle School, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: (5) I identify a problem and propose a solution.

Materials:

- Ship's Logs
- Slides, available at [.peaceliteracy.org/navigation-curricular-materials](https://www.peaceliteracy.org/navigation-curricular-materials)
- Projector or other way to display a digital slideshow

Vocabulary:

- hostile aggression
- social aggression
- passive aggression

Activity:

1. **Share** the cartoons page via email or a digital classroom platform.
2. **Show slide 1.** Title
3. "Today we are going to do an activity about passive aggression."
4. **Show slide 2.** Directions
5. **Show slide 3.** Cartoons
6. **Directions** for students:
Observe these cartoons.
In your Ship's Log, describe how each one demonstrates passive aggression.
Next, write down what you think the person is trying to communicate through their words or actions. What are they trying to say?
7. **Regroup** after 5 minutes to share students responses.
8. **Show slide 4.** Vampire

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Activity 4: Passive Aggression

Activity continued:

9. “Sometimes different kinds of aggression overlap. Take a look at these cartoons. They shows 2 different kinds of aggression. One of them is passive aggression. Can you see what the other one is?” (Allow for student responses.)
10. **Show** slide 5. Hello Catty
Have students discuss with their partners, then ask for groups to share.
11. **Show** slide 6. The Fourth Little Pig
12. “There are two kinds of aggression shown in this cartoon. What are they?” Have students discuss with their partners, then ask for groups to share.