

FLIPSIDE

The Association of Participating Service Users



Communication

No. 51 Autumn / Winter 2021

Flipside provides space for the voices of Victorians impacted by addiction. All contents featured here are produced by people who experience or have experienced addiction, either directly or through someone they care about.

Flipside is a publication of the Association of Participating Service Users - APSU, the Victorian consumer representative body for people who use alcohol and other drug treatment services.

This publication is produced on the land of the Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. APSU acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Flipside No.51 Autumn / Winter 2021

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Editorial

Communication is a pillar of human civilisation. The development of language, alphabets, signs and symbols enabled humanity to develop culture, technology, trade, politics and so many other essential elements of human civilisation.

As well as being essential and omnipresent, communication is very complex. And when we add addiction to the mix, this complexity increases.

Many people with a communication disorder self-medicate with drugs to alleviate their feelings of anxiety when communicating with others, but self-medicating often becomes a problem in itself. At the same time, having an addiction can cause a communication disorder. Whether because we have low self-confidence, feel shame, lack boundaries, try to manipulate rather than communicate, passively give too much weight to others' needs, aggressively disregard others' needs, or are unable to accept our flaws and try to be perfect in every way, our behaviour in addiction harms our ability to communicate.

In a similar way, when someone we love has a drug problem, we are forced to re-learn how to communicate. It can be difficult to accept, for "they are the one with the problem – why should I change!" Our communication patterns developed over a lifetime are suddenly challenged, and that's a tough pill to swallow.

Learning or re-learning to communicate requires a lot of work. We need to listen to both ourselves and others, respect both ourselves and others, empathise, voice our needs, know our rights, read social cues and avoid taking things too personally. Easier said than done, but done it can be. For starters, seek help and don't be too hard on yourself.

We thank our generous contributors for this issue, who shared with us their communication struggles and successes.

Edita

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| p. 6 by Eric Christian King on Unsplash | p. 17 'No title' by Anon |
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| p. 13 by Alano Oliveira on Unsplash | All other illustrations are photos taken by APSU. |

Verbalising

Apparently, we're all social creatures and our world is built around social interaction. Except some of us aren't, and some of us struggle every day to interact with others.

Communication is, without a doubt, one of the hardest aspects of my life. Actually I should qualify that by saying 'verbal' communication, because it's quite easy to sit here alone, write this and send it off anonymously. To verbalise it however, to say it out loud to someone is scary as fuck. The act of talking to people turns me into an anxious, mumbling, self-conscious, sweaty mess.



I don't know if this is a particular affliction of addicts, but I'm coming to understand how I have used drugs for many, many years to either help overcome my fear of communication and interaction, or to escape from it completely.

At age 14 my father died, suddenly and unexpectedly. I stopped talking. Just

stopped. The trauma of seeing my dad lying silent and unconscious on the cold, hard ground switched something in my brain and literally rendered me speechless.

Life continues on, even when it seems it shouldn't, and slowly I began to speak again. But it was different. Forced. Seemingly pointless.

That same year I discovered alcohol (Stones Green Ginger wine and UDLs – uhghh!) and thought I had found paradise. I could talk to people! Moreover, I liked talking – pissed me was full of talk (and full of shit). Friendships developed quickly on weekends, cemented through cheap booze, then dissolved as soon as the alcohol ran out.

Over the years, different drugs have dictated how my attempts at communication and interaction have played out: alcohol and speed freed the inhibitions and loosened the lips; choof and heroin allowed escape into my own little world, while sharing a false sense of silent camaraderie with fellow users. Drugs were an essential part of any social interaction.

Then drugs became an essential aspect of daily life.

When I first tentatively stepped into recovery what struck me was the honesty and ease with which people spoke. They spoke about their past and present, their addiction and attempts at recovery, highs and lows, loves and hates, self-hatred and self-empowerment, fears and failures, hopes and small steps forward. In short, they spoke about the shit they did, the shit they feel, and their struggles to break free of that shit. I had finally found people who walked my walk and talked my talk.

Recovery is ongoing. My battles now are with alcohol and choof – sometimes I win, sometimes I lose. But I am learning that communication is key to wellbeing in recovery. I need to get that shit out somehow, because if it stays in my mind it festers and festers and takes me to very nasty places, literally and metaphorically. Writing it out is great, but I also need to take the plunge and talk to someone – peers in recovery, counsellors, groups, empathetic friends or family. Communicating somehow helps transmute my fears, anxieties, regrets, self-loathing, guilt and indecision into something far less scary and more manageable.

Communication is still somewhat foreign, but with practice it becomes less like a foe and more like a friend. Thanks for listening.

Colleen

Communication crisis

A dedication and proclamation about technology being a regression in vital [viral] communication

© Mr Manic Mind Mechanic

Isolation is an island lost at sea,
Though no man can sincerely claim to be,
living in 'limbo' lingo's adversity.
In hilarious Aquarius you'll see.

Communication with relation to Earth,
Merits and credits our being more than mirth.
A million miles of smiles can come from birth,
Born from dawn of realisation's True worth.

Prone alone with a confidence crisis,
Could be analysis in paralysis.
A case of hypocritical hypnosis,
Quite clear but not just my own diagnosis.

So choose your muse as a gift to lift the 'blues'.
Choice is a voice to use or lose points of views.
And sing to bring into being natures news.
After all the laughter you'll have paid your dues.

Yes, there's a price to pay in life called death.
But there's much to say before that final breath.
As such could live forever not hot with meth.
Calm, cool, no harm or fool for all I knoweth.

Karma farmers not static in the 'attic',
All of us Ms or Mr Mind Mechanic,
So slow your flow though of course be emphatic,
To sow the seeds and know magic's not manic.

In these perilous times or predicaments,
Sublime crimes serve as sinister sentiments.
Rhythm and rhymes tend to mend many ailments.
The end my friend is full of all elements ©



Communicating effectively

It's never too late to learn to communicate. Communicate effectively I mean.

As a parent of four children, I didn't hold back when communicating with them. I would tell them off when they did something I didn't like – I communicated very well in those circumstances because it just came naturally to me. Yep... I could raise my voice and ensure they knew who was boss very well indeed. I got my message through for sure.

Well, I thought so anyway, till I attended SHARC's In-Focus education classes as I tried to understand why my gorgeous daughter had chosen drug usage, directly contrary to the messages I was "communicating" as she grew up.

It was only then that it really struck home that communication is a two-way thing. Even though I regarded myself as the head of the household (I hope my wife doesn't read this), I was brought up to understand that if Dad said jump, then the only thing left for the kids was to ask, "How high?"

That's how I was brought up, and I turned out very well, thank you.

I slowly learned about how I need to be aware of the stages of change – depending on where my daughter was in the cycle, I had to change the way I communicated with her.

For example, when she went off with her friends to party, it was absolutely counterproductive to tell her that she needed to go to rehab instead. At that stage, she was in total denial of her problem. Only later, when I asked her some questions and purposefully repeated her answers back to her, did we start to get some real communication going.

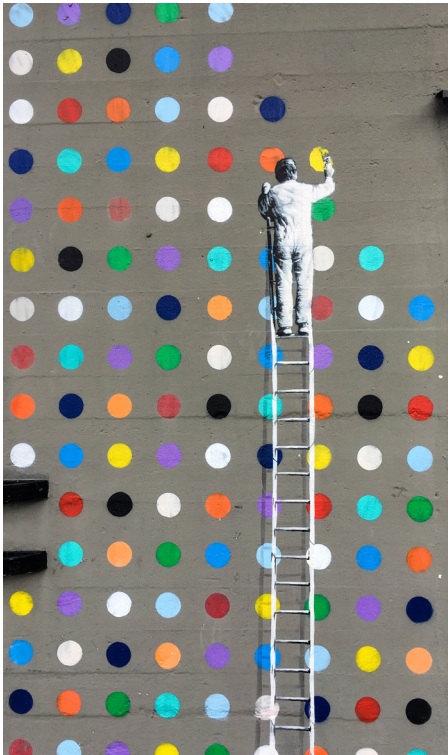
In other words, I had started the journey to understand what she was meaning as well as saying, and I then, and only then, had the opportunity to think about how to effectively get her to think about where she wanted to go next. After all, her life's journey is up to her to navigate.

I found it confronting to learn that I wasn't a good communicator with my loved ones. I was great at telling them what to do, which only worked well when I had

power over them. So I began to practice this skill they call “active listening”.

I quickly learned to be careful about who to practice active listening on. It’s all very well to get people to open up to you and encourage them to speak more openly with you, but there are some people who just go on and on about what they think is important and what they like yapping about. These people are typically holier-than-thou and full of misdirected self-importance, and not interested in you at all.

There’s no real communication in that – those conversations become painful.



So here I am in my mid-sixties, and I’m only now learning how to communicate better. It’s sad, but, as they say, better late than never. My daughter and I can now spend productive time together, communicating. We enjoy each other’s company and have two-way conversations, building trust and reinforcing the family love we have for each other.

Of course it takes two to have a good conversation. I now can play my part, and somehow, that encourages the other party to communicate well too. But I need constant reminders to take a breath, reflect, think, and respond. It still doesn’t come naturally to me, but I’m enjoying my growing ability to communicate effectively with my family.

JJ

Reflections in lineage

© Sonja Plitt 2008

The child is a mirror
Reflecting a myriad of facets
Enchanting sparkling jewel
Casts light in all directions

Illuminated self
Unveiling what lies within the
darkness
Generations of suffering play tricks on
the mind

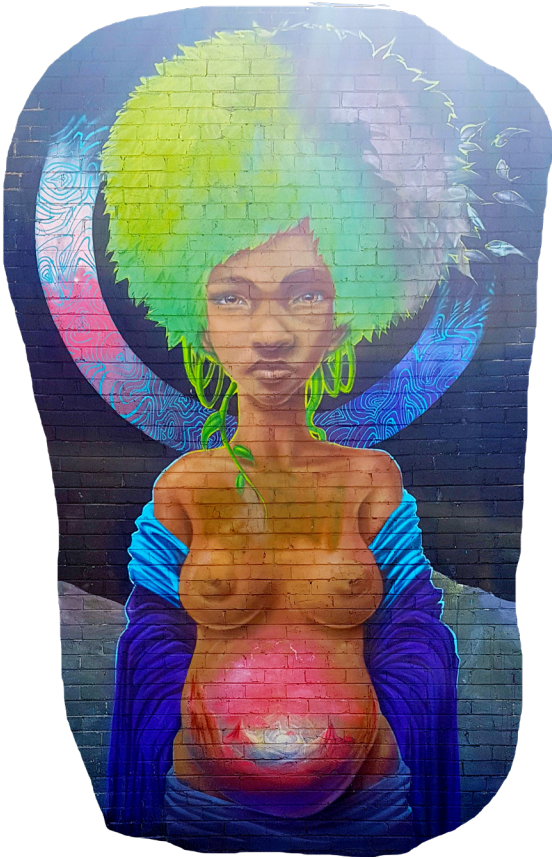
Translucent eyes plead
Love me, love me please
Unquenchable thirst
Emptiness and longing
Like and ever growing vine
Stem from distant ancestors
Passed down through time

I look into this child to whom I gave
birth
Perplexed by all the opposites nestled
close together

Entangled in the thorns
I try to cut us free
But flora spreads as far as the eye can
see

All manner of stunning flowers grow
Among this sprawling mass
Thorns and flowers entwined
Like strands of DNA

It is rather beautiful
Depending on where I stand
If I surrender to the moment
Freedom could be at hand



Knowingly unknown

I've always felt isolated, long before the pandemic forced many to share a life I've seemingly always lived.

At times I've had people so close that they inhabited my world, they found a way to cross the boundaries I've created.

Now I so rarely let people through that I feel that in some ways I can't, so I lie, I obfuscate unwittingly.

I find it hard to accept myself, so I trust others to understand and accept me even less, it seems that's how it should be.

Yet at times I share without reserve, not caring how others might feel, though with a hyper vigilance to quell misunderstanding.

I listen more than I speak, I understand others more than I do myself and worry more than I should, always.

I'm a hypocrite, my life is beset by contradictions, yet they aren't always outwardly visible, so I seem disjointed.

I've spent so long being fearful that others would stop or intervene, that my plans would fail, even when they should.

I'm not alone, I'm not connected, I love and am loved in return, but nobody experiences me as I do.

I talk little, I read more and I write often and yet my voice is often ignored and receives little response.

I want to be known and yet I fear being uncovered, I want to share though worry that I'll be misunderstood, so remain quiet.

I'm worth more than what I am willing to pay, sometimes I believe this, not often enough to make it matter.

I'll die not alone, yet few will know of me and none will truly know me, though they might think that they do.

It's not that I'm unwillingly isolated, nor that change is implausible, it's that I fear I'll fail to communicate what matters.

I fear falling, though I fear more that I'll be unwilling to jump and so I write this and choose to face the risk.

I'll work it out, I'll communicate more and fear less, I want others to know me and me them, I'll stand up and so it begins.

Brendan

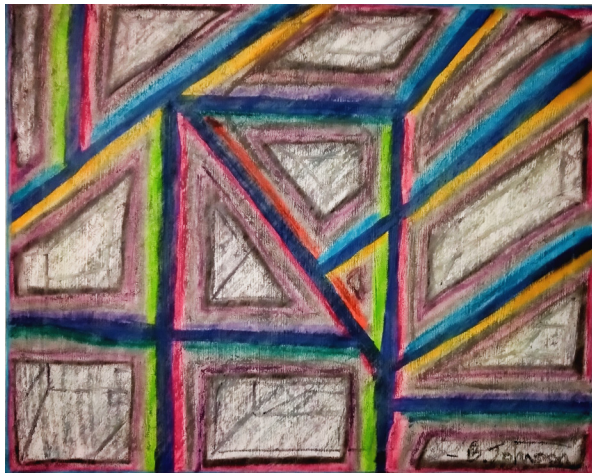
Flower - Part 2

Your house is looking cleaner. You feel a deep sense of relief and glowing pride.

You had sat for some time on the couch, looking. Really looking at your world around you. Not with eyes of judgement, but with eyes of growing clarity.

Flower sat with you.

It had been a long time since you had been able to face the way that drugs and alcohol had shaped the way you functioned within your own space. The choices you had made or not made about how you were going to run your space. We all know you know better. You have seen and felt nice spaces. You know what it is like to be in a warm and welcoming environment. You used to have some nice art and posters. You used to have stuff that you liked but over time it had either been destroyed or had become stained with the memories of destruction. The perceived worth had been reduced.



Untitled by B. Johnson

‘Let’s start organising,’ Flower said.

‘But where do I start?’ you worried.

Flower suggested, ‘Why don’t we begin an open communication and practice over the next few days?’

‘What does open communication mean, though?’ you asked.

‘I am you and you are me. You know I love you, and you are learning to love me. I do not need to tell you what to do, and you do not need to tell me how to

feel. So instead of one of us being controlling, let us try develop back and forth communication about what we are going to do. We both want us to start feeling happier. We both want us to start feeling better. We both want us to start feeling more joy. We both want us to work towards being healthier. So let's open up communication about what works for both of us.'

Flower was so calm and relaxed. There was no pressure or judgement. It made sense to start communicating openly.

'Okay', you agree. 'That sounds like something good to try. I know I am feeling a lot of dread and avoidance in facing all of this.'

'Yes, I can understand,' Flower responds. 'Why don't we start by putting on a little music that makes you feel relaxed?'

You open your phone and find a chilled piano beats playlist. It's low-key. As the tune flows out of the speaker it feels as if movement has come into the space. You stand up and open the windows. It has been some time since you have opened the windows in a welcoming way. Sure, you had opened the windows but it had been to get out stench and fumes. This time, it felt like you were inviting in a new presence of fresh air.

'How do you feel now?' Flower asks.

'Better. I have realised that we have quite a bit of time to get this done and don't feel so stressed anymore. How do you feel?' you ask.

It is strange that you can't remember the last time you actually asked yourself how you feel. In conversation with others, you had remarked on being 'good' or 'bad' or 'pissed off' as it came up in conversation, but you had not ever really asked yourself how you feel now.

'I am pleased that we are finally communicating,' Flower responds and you feel a little warmth of yellow light inside you. The sensation is foreign, but welcome. You had forgotten that you were capable of enjoying time with yourself.

With that tiny bit of yellow light you begin to flow around the house clearing out the rubbish. You have done this many times before, but this time it is different. Rather than guilt and regret, you feel that this is the beginning of a new way of being. You are not just clearing out your house but you are clearing out your mind. With the clarity you are gaining, you are letting go of the habits you know have not been serving you. You are letting go of the habits that have been bringing you down. And your purpose right now is to bring that little bit of yellow pleasure, that little bit of yellow joy, that little bit of yellow sense of home back into your life. And it's in your hands.



Bags of rubbish go out the door and into the bin.

You get into the kitchen and start clearing out.

‘Does this bring us joy?’ Flower asks.

You look at each item. What memories are associated with it? You let some items go. You wash and clean the others, then put them away.

Flower feels nice. Yellow warm glow. You feel pleased and proud that you are able to do this for yourself.

You go into your bedroom. Dread. Your sacred space is tainted. You feel overwhelmed with negativity.

‘Let’s start again.’ Flower whispers with such kindness and understanding that some tears roll down your cheeks.

You have tried to start again in the past but it was from negativity.

Now that you have connected with your Flower, it feels more like a let go of old self.

The music flows through the room.

‘What do you think we should do?’ you ask your Flower. You are aware that bigger changes will have to come.

You can feel that Flower is unhappy in the room. You start taking out the items that Flower is the saddest to be around. The drug paraphernalia. The broken furniture from the last rage fit. The half destroyed posters.

When you re-enter the room, you can feel that Flower is a little lighter. You start cleaning and washing sheets. While cleaning, you find a bit of spare cash around the place while cleaning and use it to get new sheets, a new pillow, an indoor plant and a scented oil infuser.

You find an old art box. At first, you feel self-hatred at your inability to face your dreams, but Flower chimes in, 'Come on, let's try. It will be nice to create something new.'

'But I never make what I want,' you respond with disappointment.

'Look around and what you have done with the house so far.'

You look around. Flower is right. There is a definite change in the place. It feels different.

'What do you like the most?'

'I don't know what I like anymore,' you reply.

'What do you remember liking?' Flower asks

You think back to when you were younger. You loved being outdoors, and you loved looking up at the sky.

Without even thinking about it, you take some scissors and start cutting out stars.

They are very simple. You start feeling self-critical.

'I LOVE them!' says Flower and you can really feel it. Your shoulders lose a bit of tension and you relax into the process. You make some other shapes and then blue-tak them up on the wall. The room has transformed just with the fresh art up on the wall. What you have made with Flower.

Flower feels so good. You sit down and draw one more picture. It is you holding hands with your Flower.

And you put it up on the wall.

Underneath, you write,

'I believe in you'

Flower feels so good, it is as if you are being hugged from the inside. It's nice to start feeling like home.



Dario Gardell

The Merry Go Round

© Sheree Emery

\$70 bucks a pop
Gee that's a lot
For a bag of tiny crystals
Gone in one shot

My body's so used to them now
No big, wonderful IPOW!
Yet still I get lured in
Without even knowing how

I know that I don't want it
I don't need it one little bit
But I'm at the dealer's anyway
How do I get myself out of this pit?

It's like there's two of me
In steps the "other" Sheree
She says we're going to score
How does the real me get free?

I'd spend the money in other ways
Not listening to what she says
If I could just get control of her
But that's not how the devil plays

He thrives off the addicted
Those of us afflicted
Locked up in invisible chains
Scoring again like he predicted

I refuse to hate myself
Or worry about my health
Feel guilty bout getting on
Or the impact on my wealth

I never planned to be lost in addiction
This nightmare aint no fiction

The struggle is raw & it's real
My lonely, sad affliction

I've tried counsellors & the local NA
Surrendered my will & life every day
To God, my higher power
I'm back at the dealers anyway

High tolerance so I need more
Back at the dealers to score
\$70 bucks a pop
What does this little bag have in store?

Maybe I will get high
Not feel like I want to cry
Over wasting my money again
Well, I gotta give it a try

Cause that other Sheree won't listen
Before I know it we're off on a mission
Now I'm holding this little bag
And she never got my permission

Into my body it goes
What it'll do, no-one knows
Ahh, I feel a rush
Now my love for it grows

I'm running at full capacity now
That last shot was, like, "OH WOW"
Love affair with the drug re-ignites
To stop it I don't know how

I'm on a merry-go-round
Love & hate for the crystal I've found
Maybe I think to myself.....
I'm just not mentally sound.

Attitude change

I have learnt so much about communicating from my much-loved son who is struggling with addiction. I have learnt to think about how it would be from his perspective when I speak with him. That has changed so much between us. I have learnt to say what I mean, mean what I say, but don't say it mean. Something I learnt from Al-Anon, which has created much respect on both sides.

Communicating with an attitude change in me has created a great platform for us to discuss things he would never have discussed in the past. He feels heard. Sometimes good communication is just listening and acknowledging what is being said. Simple strategies that eluded me when I was filled with anxiety and worry, and wanted him to stop so that I could be happy. I don't like it that he still struggles, however it's my problem to get over that and I have great hope that one day he will win this battle.



He has also changed how he communicates with me since I have changed. It just happened organically and I feel that now by giving him respect, he respects me too. A win-win for us both.

I feel that my previously unaddressed tension and worry caused so many arguments between us, and I had to address that so I could communicate much more effectively with him. The tone of voice and my anxiety always came through and he felt responsible for my pain, which made it all worse. By accepting the situation and working towards it from own perspective, communication has improved dramatically.

Anonymous

Creative pursuits

Thinking back to my younger days, I'm sure I didn't have as much trouble communicating my thoughts and feelings, although perhaps they weren't interpreted the way I wanted them to be. I was able to express myself more easily.

As an adult, now that I'm supposed to be responsible and all that, I find communication really difficult. I believe that my drug use, both current and past, plays a big role in this. From not answering or returning phone calls, to not being able to have important conversations, my communication skills are below average to say the very least.

One thing I have discovered the last few years is that artwork is a great way to express how you feel and communicate it to the world without having to resort to words. Before I discovered art, I always loved to write. I had a journal until I was betrayed by my step father who read it and used the contents against me. I did still however go back to writing in a journal when I had emotions to express that I didn't feel I could tell anyone, so most of my journal entries from my teens and early adulthood are desperate cries for help and blatant suicidal tendencies written neatly in my hand writing. As addicts it's so important to get these feelings out – especially the ones of desperation and hardship – or they linger, simmering away until they explode.



'No title' by Anon

My ex died, and I believe if he could have communicated with someone how he was feeling he never would have overdosed that day. He didn't leave a note, so I don't know for sure, but his behaviour makes me think he deliberately committed suicide, leaving behind our beautiful daughter and his loving son. Just being able to express himself could have saved him. Perhaps that's why I am trying so hard to communicate my thoughts and feelings now, too.



'Mixed Media Collage Painting' by Glenda P

Before I knew what the topic was for this issue of *Flipside*, I knew I wanted to submit a piece of writing even if it wouldn't get accepted. I would have communicated in my own way. I really want to encourage others to try and find what works for them when communicating. Do you just like to shoot the shit and talk to your mates? Have you also kept an angst ridden diary full of your deepest and darkest thoughts? Maybe you too have discovered the power of arts and crafts, and how creating allows us to explore our thoughts and feelings, and express them in a way that feels safe. Maybe we will decide to communicate with ourselves allowing that to have its own healing power over us, helping us recover and even discover our true inner selves.

Sometimes after using drugs for a long time we may need to have our own self-communication to get to know ourselves once again and find out we are deserving of being heard, understood and acknowledged. When we move away from expressing ourselves in an aggressive or overly defensive manner we can find that we are heard. Just like listening to ourselves having others listen can be a healing experience and one we could all benefit from.

The same goes for art. Its powerful healing abilities are often under-reported, as many people keep their creative pursuits to themselves, but I think it's so much more fun when you can share them with someone who understands. They don't even have to understand what it is you are expressing, just that you are expressing something and that something is important because it's how you think and feel and experience the world. Too often as drug users or recovering addicts we are made to feel that those things aren't important, but to us those things are everything and we deserve the right to express them as we wish, so long as we aren't hurting anyone in doing so.

Today is a great time to pick up a pen and paper and write to someone you care about. Or pick up a paintbrush and express yourself to the world like you're your own Van Gogh. Whatever way you do it I encourage you to communicate your thoughts and feelings safely and openly. If you haven't got a trusted friend then just use a journal or piece of paper. Heck, I even use napkins when I'm desperate to get it all out of my head! And it helps, it really does!

Being assertive is another thing that can help us and those around us when we communicate, because being too passive or too aggressive is hurtful and ends up helping nobody. For some people assertiveness comes naturally, but for others, like me, it takes some learning from counsellors and anger management courses. Today I am cool, calm and collected even in very high-stress situations, and I am able and willing to communicate when necessary, which is a huge thing for me. Looking back at my younger self, things have definitely changed in the way of communication, and creativity has had a big place in me finding the inner shift.

If you have trouble communicating, I hope you too find some way to help you get through it. Heck, why not try and write something for *Flipside*? I don't even know you, yet I know you have ideas and thoughts that matter and could help someone.

Anonymous

Quiz: How assertive are you?

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1) Do you buy things you do not want because you are afraid to say no to the salesperson? | Yes | No |
| 2) When you do not understand the meaning of the word, do you ask about it? | Yes | No |
| 3) Do you feel responsible when things go wrong, even if it is not your fault? | Yes | No |
| 4) Do you look directly at others when you talk to them? | Yes | No |
| 5) Do people often ask you to speak more loudly in order to be heard? | Yes | No |
| 6) Do you feel intimidated by people in authority? | Yes | No |
| 7) Do you generally have good posture? | Yes | No |
| 8) Do you often feel so angry you could scream? | Yes | No |
| 9) Do you know how to ask for help without feeling dependent? | Yes | No |
| 10) If someone cuts in front of you in a line, do you usually tell them off? | Yes | No |

Assertive responses

- 1) No: The assertive person is not afraid to say no. She or he feels free to make choices.
- 2) Yes: The assertive person takes responsibility for getting his or her needs met. Fear of seeming ignorant does not prevent the assertive person from asking questions.
- 3) No: The assertive person takes responsibility for his / her own behaviour, but does not take responsibility for the behaviour of others or for situations which are beyond his / her control. To feel responsible for things beyond your control leads to unnecessary feelings of guilt.
- 4) Yes: Direct eye contact is assertive and suggests sincerity, self-confidence and the expectation that others will listen.
- 5) No: An assertive person wants to be heard.
- 6) No: An assertive person does not allow status to intimidate him / her.
- 7) Yes: Good posture communicates a positive self-image. When posture is limited by a disability, good eye contact and facial expression can be used to express a positive self-image.
- 8) No: The assertive person works to get his / her needs met and does not let situations build to the point of crisis.
- 9) Yes: The assertive person is able to ask for help without feeling dependent because he / she maintains a strong sense of self-worth and self-respect.
- 10) No: Telling someone off is an angry, aggressive response. The assertive person would state that he or she is irritated by the unfairness and ask the person to move to the end of the line.

Quiz: Do you have healthy boundaries?

1. Do you have clear preferences and act upon them? Always | Sometimes | Never
2. Do you recognize when you are happy or unhappy? Always | Sometimes | Never
3. Do you trust your intuition while being open to the opinions of others? Always | Sometimes | Never
4. Are you only satisfied if you are thriving? Always | Sometimes | Never
5. Are you engaged/excited by self-enhanced hobbies or projects? Always | Sometimes | Never
6. Do you have a personal standard that you apply to everyone? Always | Sometimes | Never
7. Do you hold yourself and other accountable for their actions? Always | Sometimes | Never
8. Do you appreciate feedback? Always | Sometimes | Never
9. Can you tell the difference between authentic feedback and an attempt to manipulate? Always | Sometimes | Never
10. Do you allow yourself to experience emotions, even anger, but don't allow them to rule you? Always | Sometimes | Never
11. Do you act out of agreement and negotiation? Always | Sometimes | Never
12. Do you only do favors that you choose to do...in other words, you could have said no to? Always | Sometimes | Never
13. Can you distinguish the difference between your intuition and wishful thinking? Always | Sometimes | Never
14. Are you aware of your choices? Always | Sometimes | Never
15. Do you protect your private matters without lying or being surreptitious? Always | Sometimes | Never

Add up your score: For every "Always" answer, give yourself 3 points, for every "Sometimes" 2 points, and for every "Never" 1 point.

Results:

35 - 45 points: Your boundaries are pretty healthy. For those questions that you scored lower than a 3, take a look at how you might strengthen your boundaries in those situations where you let them bend a bit too much.

25 - 35 points: Your boundaries are a bit too flexible, at least in certain situations. You might consider working on strengthening your boundaries so that your "yes" actually means "yes" and your "no" actually means "no."

Below 25 points: Your boundaries are more than likely too permeable and you are probably easily manipulated or taken advantage of. You would do well working on strengthening your boundaries.

(from www.CarmaSpence.com)

Meet Amelia, APSU's new team member

Tea or coffee?

Definitely coffee. I drink way too much of it.

What is your favourite book?

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

What is your spirit animal?

I did a quiz online and it said I'm a crocodile.

What is your favourite colour?

Purple

What is your favourite movie?

The Shawshank Redemption

What super power would you choose to have?

I think shapeshifting would be pretty cool.

Who is your role model?

The late Jude Byrne. She was a fierce advocate for the health and human rights of people who use alcohol and other drugs.

What music do you listen to when you feel happy?

80s and 90s rock. I love to sing and dance around to it.

If your biography was to be published 30 years from now, what title would you like it to have?

Tiny but Mighty!

Do you have a tip for effective communication?

Communicate mindfully. Be aware of body language and other non-verbal cues. Most importantly, listen!





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APSU believes that people who use alcohol and other drug treatment services are the reason the system exists; their needs, strengths and expertise should drive the system. APSU is run by service users for service users and has an active member base. We invite you to join us in having a say. APSU membership is **free**, confidential and open to anyone interested in voicing their opinions and ideas on the issues facing AOD service users today. We need your help to give us all a fair go. To become a member please fill out the form below and post to: **140 Grange Road, Carnegie VIC 3163** or fax to: **03 9572 3498** or go to: **www.apsuonline.org.au** to register online.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I wish to become a member of APSU. I understand that by becoming a member of APSU I will receive:

- ◆ The six-monthly *Flipside* magazine
- ◆ Information on how to become involved
- ◆ Information on opportunities for people with lived experience (i.e. training, jobs, research participation etc.)

I am a: Service user Family member Service provider Other

How did you find out about APSU? _____

Language spoken at home: _____

Cultural identity: _____

Age: 16-25 25-35 36-45 46-65 over 65

Full name: _____

Address: _____

City/Suburb: _____ Postcode: _____

Preferred phone number: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT: All personal details obtained by APSU will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes outlined above.



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