



# **Social Skills**

## **Passive Aggression**

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## Passive Aggression

It is very difficult to deal with passive aggression from others. But I like to help students learn how to spot it and how to deal with it, because passive aggressive comments and behaviors are hostile and my students don't deserve hostility. We start by discussing the name: "aggressive" referring to active hostility and "passive" because the perpetrator wants to engage in belligerent behaviors without being called out. I give my students examples of insults that sound like compliments, such as "I love that top on you—you don't look so fat in it". Then, for each example listed we discuss how it is hostile (the aggression—often an implied insult or an attempt to embarrass) and how the perpetrator tries to mask the hostility (the passive nature). We then discuss how to handle the comment or behavior. I encourage my students to calmly call the other person on the hostility for two reasons: first, I want them to stand up for themselves, and second, getting called on can discourage the perpetrator from attempting passive aggressive comments and behaviors moving forward. Of course, there can be various circumstances that would deter my students from speaking up, and they need to do what works best for them in any situation.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Spotting and Dealing with Passive Aggressive Comments and Behaviors

**Directions:** Discuss patterns of passive aggressive acts and making a decision to react. Then, discuss the passive aggressive nature of each of the following and effective ways to deal with each.

1. You and your friend are walking through a mall. Your friend says, “Oh, those two girls we just passed are so mean! They were making fun of your pants!”
2. Your family recently was able to move from a small home into a bigger place. Your friend says, “You must be so happy in your new home—your other place was tiny. I know you’re relieved to be in a bigger home.”
3. After getting test results back in class, a classmate glances at your test and says to you, “I give you a lot of credit! I know Earth Science doesn’t come easily to you, so you must have put in a lot of study time to pull off that 88 you got!”
4. A coworker says to you in front of other coworkers, “Hey, good job dealing with that student. I don’t know why he always gives you such a hard time!”
5. You are 5’2” tall. A 5’9” friend tells you, “You are so lucky! It must be nice to be able to always fit into small spaces. I have to scrunch up my legs to fit.”
6. You deal with frequent breakouts and today you have a major zit right in the middle of your forehead. At lunch, a clear-skinned classmate says to you in front of several other classmates, “Remind me to give you the number of my dermatologist. She’s great and will clear you up in no time.”
7. In gym class, one of the hottest students (whom you secretly have a crush on) hangs out with you throughout the whole period. When the bell rings, your best friend (who knows about your crush) walks by and, in view of your crush, gives you a big smile and a thumbs-up.
8. You got the worst haircut, but at a party the next night no one sees it since you’ve so expertly hidden it under your new cap. A friend (who was with you when you got the haircut) takes the cap off your head at the party to try on and after seeing your face says, “oh no, sorry! I totally forgot!”

