

■ Definition

This involves standing up for your personal rights and expressing your thoughts, feelings and beliefs in a way which is usually inappropriate and always violates the rights of the other person. People often feel devastated by an encounter with an aggressive person. Superiority is maintained by putting others down. When threatened, you attack, aiming at the vulnerability exposed in the other.

■ Message communicated

This is what I think, what I want, what I feel. What matters to you isn't important to me.

■ Subconscious thoughts

I'll get you, before you have a chance of getting me. I'm out for Number One. The world is a battle ground and I am out to win.

■ Goal

To dominate, to win, to force the other person to lose, and to punish.

■ Verbal and non-verbal characteristics

- ◆ Intruding into the other's space
- ◆ Staring the other person out
- ◆ Strident, sarcastic or condescending voice
- ◆ Parental body gestures (eg, finger pointing)
- ◆ Threats (eg, 'You'd better watch out . . .', 'If you don't . . .')
- ◆ Put downs (eg, 'You've got to be kidding', 'Don't be so stupid')
- ◆ Evaluative comments (ie, emphasising concepts like 'should', 'bad', 'ought')
- ◆ Sexist/racist remarks

■ Payoffs

You get others to do your bidding. Things tend to go your way and you like that feeling of control in shaping your life. You are likely to secure the material needs and objects you desire. You are less vulnerable in a culture characterised by struggle, hostility and competition.

■ Price

Aggressive behaviour creates enemies, which can induce greater fear and a sense of paranoia, making life more difficult for you. If, through your aggression, you control what others do, this takes time and mental energy and makes it difficult for you to relax. Relationships tend to be based on negative emotions and are likely to be unstable.

Aggressive people often do feel inferior deep down and try to compensate for that by putting others down.