



DEALING WITH PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS AT HOME AND WORK

Carrie Rogers-Whitehead | PCI Webinars



OUR ROAD MAP

- What is Passive Aggressive Behavior?
- What causes Passive Aggressive Behavior?
- Tips and tricks for dealing with Passive Aggressive Behavior at work & home
- Reframing conflict
- Are you an enabler?
- Discussion

“

“Passive aggressive behavior is a means for us to show our anger in a subversive, seemingly consequence-free way.

-Andrea Brandt

Has this ever happened to you?



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

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 non-hostile



EXAMPLES OF PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

- Inaction or stalling
- Acts of revenge
- Speaking negatively behind someone's back
- Withholding praise or affection
- Never say no; or always say yes
- Use sarcasm heavily
- Negative outlook on life
- Frequently frustrated or irritable
- Chronic feelings of victimhood



LEVELS OF PASSIVE AGGRESSIVENESS

1. Temporary Compliance
2. Intentional Inefficiency
3. Letting Problems Escalate
4. Hidden but Conscious Revenge- Sabotage, lying or other deliberate acts
5. Self-depreciation- hurting yourself to get back at others



WHAT CAUSES PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR?

From childhood to the workplace





INFLUENCES IN

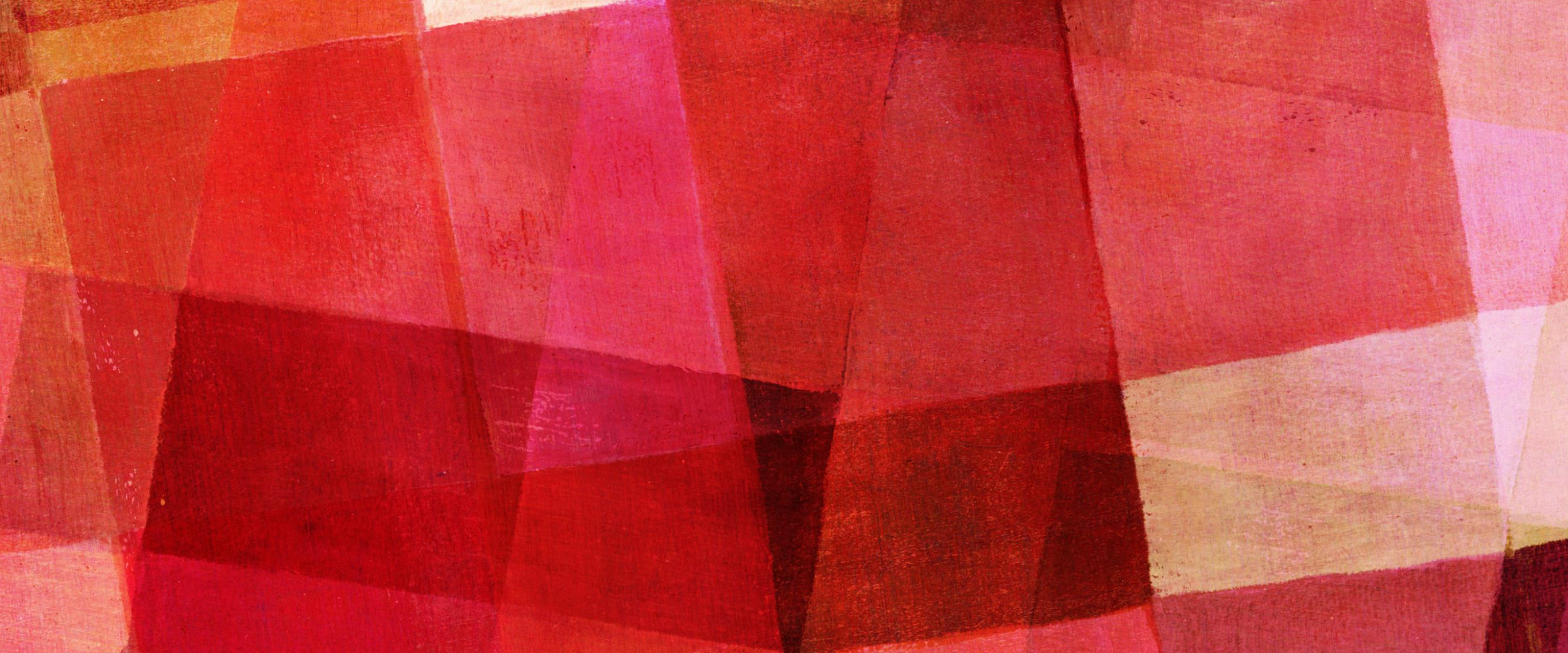
CHILDHOOD

- One parent 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

OTHER INFLUENCERS

- **CULTURE:** Studies show that cultures from Chinese and East Asian cultures are more likely to feel mixed emotions during a positive event.
- **SEX:** When women express anger they are viewed negatively compared to when men express anger.
- **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





TIPS AND TRICKS

For dealing with Passive aggressive behavior





And a step backward, after
making a wrong turn, is a
step in the right direction.

Kurt Vonnegut



REFRAMING CONFLICT

It's OK to be angry



“

"The more we run from conflict, the more it masters us; the more we try to avoid it, the more it controls us; the less we fear conflict, the less it confuses us; the less we deny our differences, the less they divide us."

-David Augsburger



COMPASSIONATE ASSERTIVENESS

- Passive aggressive behavior is rooted in a feeling of victimhood & selfishness
- Speaking with compassionate assertiveness says: “I believe my thoughts are important, and I also respect your thoughts.”
- You can be assertive and direct, but also speak with empathy and kindness
- Listen, listen, listen!

DOS AND DON'T OF CONFLICT

DO

- Realize conflict is healthy and natural, don't be scared
- Take responsibility for your actions
- Express appreciation for the other person
- Be open to feedback
- Pay attention to body language

DON'T

- Argue about the past
- Raise your voice or swear
- Tell the other person what to do
- Respond to provocation; those with passive aggressive behavior will deliberate provide to justify their own behavior

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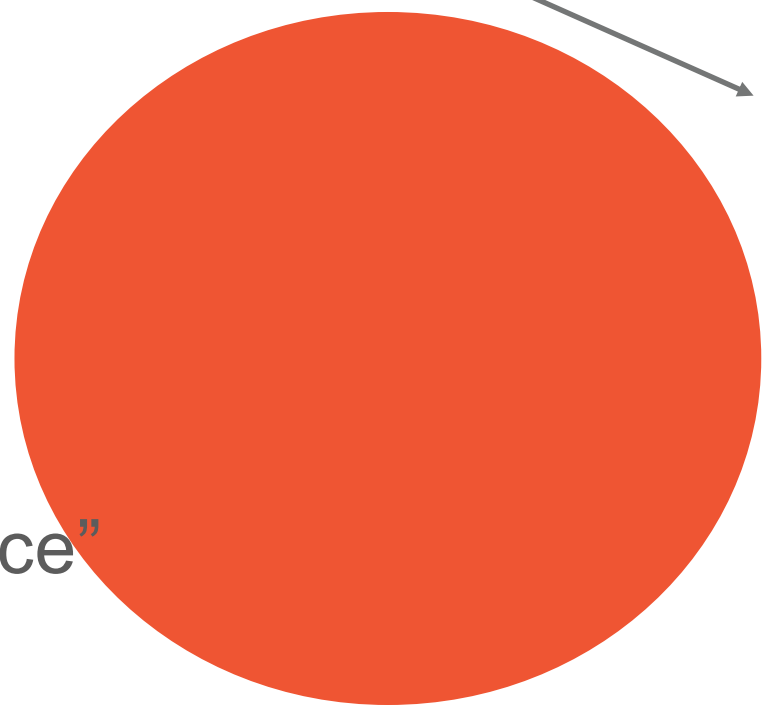
When partners begin to respond with passive aggression to the passive aggressive personality the circuit closes in an endless loop where no one says what they mean”

-Andrea Brandt

DON'T GET STUCK IN THE LOOP

“Going on a coffee run, can I get you anything?”

ANGER



“Now you ask me?”

“What?”

“I was just trying to be nice”

“Nothing. I’m fine. Got TONS of work to do”



SETTING BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are important in passive aggressive relationships



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

-Andrea Brandt

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 others 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 of conflict and expressing feelings because they don't want to be abandoned
- Always say yes, or always say no. Get taken advantage of or take advantage of others



ENABLING

Are you stuck in a passive aggressive loop?



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 needs to feel wanted and indispensable

DEVELOP A HEALTHY DETACHMENT

- Set limits
- Let others solve their own problems
- Try not to take things personally
- Develop healthy outlets to release anger
- Step away with love and empathy



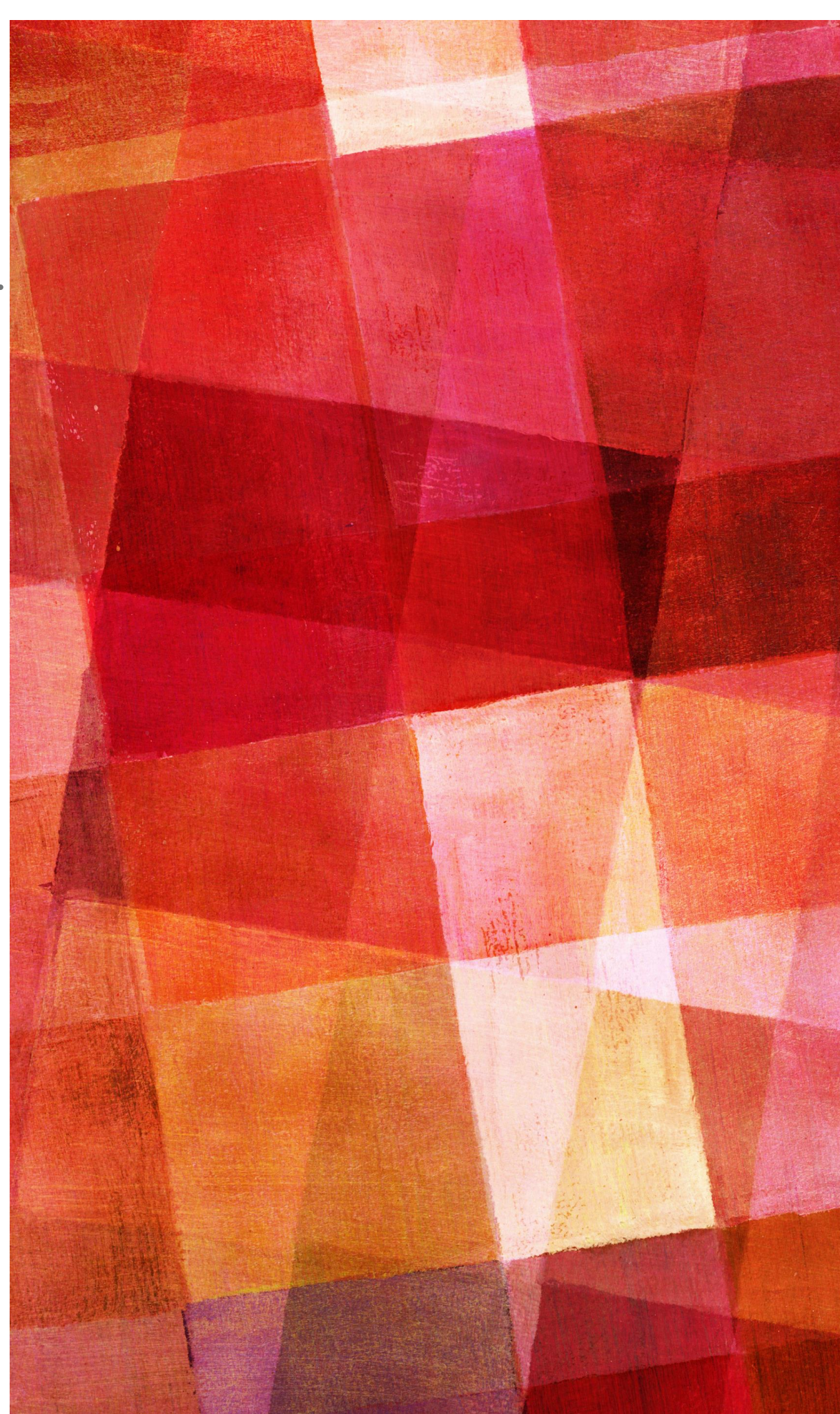


DEALING WITH A PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE BOSS

- This is a very difficult situation, if you can get out: do
- Over communicate
- Always ask for clarification, don't let them be vague
- Try to find healthy outlets and safe spaces
- Document problem behavior, take it to HR if necessary

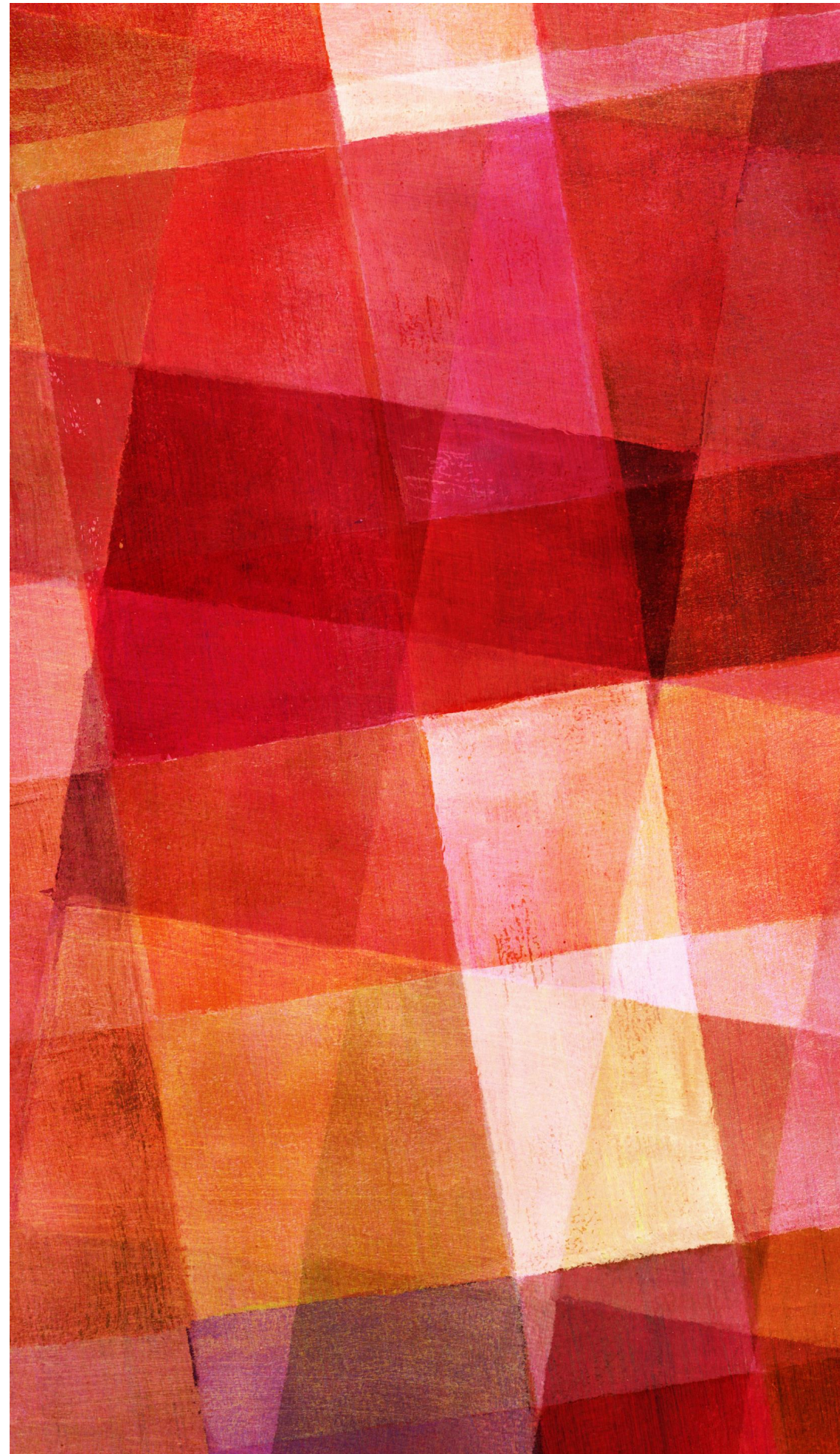
DEALING WITH A PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE EMPLOYEE

- 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



DISCUSSION

Share your story



RESOURCES

- 8 Keys to Eliminating Passive-Aggressiveness 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.
- The Angry Smile: The Psychology of Passive Aggressive Behavior in Families, Schools and Workplaces by Jody and Nicholas Long and Signe Witson



QUESTIONS?

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