

Communicating What I Need



Clear communication is not about finding perfect words. It is about slowing things down enough to understand what is happening for you, what matters underneath it, and what you would like the other person to know.



START WITH WHAT HAPPENED

Describe the specific situation rather than making a judgement about the other person's character or intentions. Keep the focus on what you noticed.



NOTICE WHAT YOU FEEL

Anger or frustration may be the first feeling you notice. Sometimes hurt, fear, sadness, loneliness, rejection or disappointment sit underneath.



IDENTIFY WHAT MATTERS

Ask yourself what feels important underneath the reaction. You may be needing reassurance, respect, closeness, space, reliability, understanding or something else.



MAKE A CLEAR REQUEST

A request tells the other person what would help. It is specific and allows them to respond, rather than expecting them to guess what you need.

FROM BLAME TO CLEARER COMMUNICATION

Instead of: "You never listen to me."

Try: "When I was talking and you looked at your phone, I felt dismissed. I would really like your attention while I finish what I am saying."

A useful structure

"When ____ happens, I feel _____. What I need / would like is _____."

Preparing for a Conversation



Use this page to work out what you want to communicate before a difficult conversation. You do not need to use these exact words - the aim is to become clearer about your experience and request.

1. WHAT HAPPENED?

Describe the specific situation as neutrally as you can. What did you see, hear or notice?

2. WHAT AM I FEELING?

What emotions are present? If anger is strongest, is there anything underneath it?

3. WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO ME UNDERNEATH THIS?

What value, need or concern is making this matter to me?

4. WHAT DO I NEED OR WANT THE OTHER PERSON TO UNDERSTAND?

What part of your experience would you most like them to understand?

5. WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO ASK FOR?

Make the request as specific and realistic as possible. What would you like to happen differently?

6. HOW CAN I SAY THIS WITHOUT BLAME?

Draft the words you would like to use. Focus on your experience, your need and a clear request.

Remember

Clear communication cannot guarantee the response you want. You can communicate respectfully and still maintain your own boundaries.