

Sarah Waters Therapy

Clear Communication

How to ask for what you need

1. Describe the problem or behaviour which is upsetting you. (for example, 'When you don't let me know that you are going to be late coming home....')
2. Share your feelings about the problem or behaviour. (e.g. 'I feel very anxious.' If it feels appropriate, you could explain why in order to increase the other person's understanding, e.g: 'because I worry that something bad has happened to you.')
3. Describe what effect this has on you ('This makes me feel really panicky and ill and I can't settle to anything until I know that you are O.K.')
4. Pause to listen to what the other person has to say about this - just listen, and do not let yourself start to defend yourself or blame.
5. State clearly what it is you need from the other person ('What I need from you is for you to let me know if you are going to be late home and when you think you will be here')
6. Ask the person clearly if they are prepared to change their behaviour: ('Would you be willing to do this for me for my peace of mind?')
7. Negotiate if there are differences between what you want and what the other person is prepared to do ('When I am in a meeting and it is going on later than expected, I can't break off and give you a ring'. ('I can understand that but perhaps you could let me know in the morning that there is a possibility that you might be late and ring me as soon as you have finished the meeting so I know you are on your way.')
8. If you are unable to negotiate the differences, agree to disagree, but where possible, keep the lines of communication open. (I see that at the moment, we don't seem to be able to reach an agreement on how to deal with this conflicts, but can we talk about this again sometime?)

Remember : Describe the behaviour that you find difficult
Share your feelings about it
Describe the effect it has on you
State what you need from the other person
Ask the person clearly if they will change their behaviour

The above is based on Marshall Rosenberg's principle of **Nonviolent Communication**, which is sometimes referred to as compassionate communication 'Its purpose is to strengthen our ability to inspire compassion from others and to respond compassionately to others and to ourselves...Nonviolent communication guides us to reframe how we express ourselves and hear others by focusing our consciousness on what we are observing, feeling, needing and requesting.' (quoted from The Center for Nonviolent Communication website: www.cnvc.org)