

## BRIEF COMMUNICATION TOOLS

### Ten Steps for Conversations That Lead To Resolution

1. **Set the stage:** plan a time and place to discuss concerns.
2. Determine **who** needs to be involved in the conversation.
3. Start the conversation; **observe without evaluating**; use “I” messages.
4. **Listen** to understand and identify needs.
5. **Ask**, don’t make assumptions.
6. **Separate the problem from the person.**
7. Brainstorm **options** to resolve the problem.
8. **Choose** a mutually agreeable solution.
9. **Reiterate and confirm** agreements and follow-up steps.
10. Agree on a **process** to resolve differences in the future.

### Non-Adversarial Communication/Non-Violent Communication

#### **1. Speak about the observations that are leading you to feel the need to say something.**

These should be purely factual observations, with no component of judgment or evaluation. Evaluative statements often cause defensiveness or disagreement; observable facts provide a common ground for communication.

**Example:** "It's 1 a.m. and I hear your music playing" states an observed fact, as opposed to "It's way too late to be making such an awful racket" which makes an evaluation.

#### **2. Speak about the feeling that the observation is triggering in you. Or, guess what the other person is feeling, and ask.**

Naming the emotion, without judgment, enables you to connect in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation. Try to accurately identify the feeling that you or the other person are experiencing in that moment, and not with the aim of shaming them for their feeling or otherwise trying to prevent them from feeling as they do.

**Example:** “I’m tired and feeling anxious.”

#### **3. Speak about your need that is the cause of that feeling. Or, guess the need that caused the feeling in the other person, and ask.**

By tuning into the feeling, you can often find the underlying need. Then state the need (guess at the need if you are the listener), without judging it. We all have universal needs like safety, security, and connection. Needs never begin with “I need you to....”

**Example:** "I have to function well at work tomorrow, and I need sleep tonight."

**4. Make a concrete request for action to meet the need just identified.** Ask clearly and specifically for what you want right now (or what the other might want if you are the listener), rather than hinting or stating only what you don't want. For the request to really be a request, and not a demand, allow the other person to say no or propose an alternative.

**Example:** "Would you be willing to turn down the sound so that it can't be heard outside of your bedroom?" A good follow up request may be, "Would you be OK with setting a time tomorrow that we could talk about some options so this isn't a problem for us in the future?"

## Sentence Templates

Sometimes, a memorized sentence template can help structure what you need to say:

- "I see \_\_\_\_" or "I am hearing \_\_\_\_" are ways to state an observation clearly so that the other person hears it as an observation.
- "I am thinking \_\_\_\_" is a way to express a thought so it is heard as a thought, which is capable of changing as you get new information or ideas.
- "Would you be willing to \_\_\_\_?" is a clear way to make a request.
- "Would you like it if I \_\_\_\_?" is a way to offer to help fulfill a need just identified, while leaving the other person still responsible for their own need.
- A complete template for all four steps could go: "I see \_\_\_\_\_. I am feeling \_\_\_\_\_ because I am needing \_\_\_\_\_. Would you be willing to \_\_\_\_\_?" Or, "I see \_\_\_\_\_. Are you feeling \_\_\_\_\_ because you are needing \_\_\_\_\_?" followed by "Would it meet your need if I \_\_\_\_\_?" or a statement of your own feeling and need followed by a request.

Avoid saying "You made me feel \_\_\_\_\_", "I feel \_\_\_\_\_ because you did \_\_\_\_\_," and especially, "You're making me angry." These put responsibility for your feelings on the other person, and they skip identifying the need that is the true cause of your feeling. An alternative: "When you did \_\_\_\_\_, I felt \_\_\_\_\_ because I needed \_\_\_\_\_."