

The Art of Making a Request

Requests are a tool for self-empowerment by giving us a tangible way of taking care of our own needs. They can free us of the expectation/waiting for others to fulfill them.

This 4th NVC step is important, because when we express only partly, we leave the listener to fill in, e.g. . .

"I feel lonely" could lead the listener to think he hasn't been home enough for me lately, or another blame-ridden story.

"I am longing for togetherness/connection" again isn't a full expression, because it doesn't say enough about my ideal steps that can be taken to meet my needs. The listener might experience pressure to do something, but feel a bit lost as to what. He may also have the thought he hasn't been doing enough.

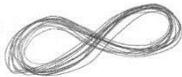
Example full expression, with request: "I notice I've been home the past 4 nights on my own and I feel a bit lonely. I'd so love to be together tonight and experience some connection. If you'd like that, too, can we brainstorm some ideas that we'd both enjoy?"

Note: If you fear this will come across as too slick, even manipulative, remember to forewarn the listener that you are trying something new, out of your desire to fully connect, and that you can hear a "no"!

2 types of requests:

1. Dialogue

- Connection



e.g. "How is it for you to hear?" (open to connect with the listener's feelings & needs and seek creativity so that all needs can be met)

- Reformulation



e.g. "Can you tell me what you understood me say?" – from wanting to know that the request was heard as it was meant / avoid misunderstandings.

2. Action



e.g. "Would you be willing to . . .?" - request to myself, someone else, or a group. You can start with an abstract dream scenario, but it's important to narrow it down to something very concrete and doable.

Example action request to self:

"I wish to always arrive on time [a dream, undoable request] . . .

Tomorrow, I will set my timer 15 minutes earlier, avoid hitting the snooze button, walk out the door at 7.45, and arrive at 8.55 to the staff meeting."

For practice (or real life!), try using the following action request checklist . . .

Request Checklist

- I can start by making a clear observation (just the indisputable facts)
- I can state what I felt/feel when this happened/happens
- I can state my related need(s), what's really important for me, what I long for
- Based on my need(s), I can imagine an effective strategy to help meet it
- When I formulate this strategy as a request, it uses positive language (e.g. use of "do" instead of "don't")
- It avoids words that indicate a subtle demand (e.g. "should," "ought," "must," or "have to")
- It is concrete, with very clear, specific action(s)*
- It is time-oriented (e.g. clock time, date, part of existing daily routine)*
- It is a small/easy enough step (setting the bar too high can yield an unrealistic request)
- It is highly likely to be done (ask yourself questions like, "When will others KNOW to carry it out?" "What specific steps will/can others definitely take?" "Do I sense any resistance/barriers/doubts?" If so, rephrase request until they are gone)
- I can hear a "no" to my request
- I plan to evaluate regularly to fine-tune the request, and if necessary, start over with observation*

* applicable only to Action requests

Inspiration tip:

We have a need and request each time we speak, but very often aren't aware of either. Try guessing what these might be for others, to practice, lend support and connect!



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