



# How To Ask For What You Want

Communication Tips Adapted From  
Dialectical Behavior Therapy

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# WHAT To Say

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# Step 1. Describe

Describe the situation as neutrally as possible - as if you were a detective reporting just the facts.

Eg. "I made dinner for you hoping that we could eat together."

# Step 2. Express

Express any emotions or opinions associated with the situation that you are describing.

Eg. "I felt disappointed when you didn't come home at dinnertime, and I started to worry about where you were."

# Step 3. Ask

State a specific need when you ask for what you want. Help the listener understand exactly what you need by giving a specific suggestion.

Eg. "Can you text me when you can't make it home before 7pm?"

# Step 4. Reward

Remind the listener what is at stake by explaining the positive benefits that come with fulfilling your request. Look for rewards that you have in common.

Eg. "That way I can save you a plate or do my own thing without worrying since I know you'll be out."



# HOW To Say It

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Now that you know the words you want to say - think about HOW to deliver your message.

# HOW to Say It

Stay MINDFUL of *\*your\** goals. Ask yourself:

How do I want to feel after this conversation is over?  
What is important here?  
What do I want to accomplish?

Appear CONFIDENT:

Behave as if this issue is really important to you - because, it is! Play by the rules -- confident in your approach.

Be ready to NEGOTIATE:

Understand your core needs vs. areas of flexibility, and be willing to negotiate in proportion to these needs. Listen to your gut in setting appropriate boundaries.



The 'How to Ask for What You Want' communication strategies are drawn and adapted from Marsha Linehan's DEAR MAN technique from the DBT Skills Training Manual. DBT is a research-backed counseling method that incorporates proven strategies in four areas of emotional wellness: coping with stress, mood management, mindfulness, and strong relationships.