

Conflict scenarios

This activity promotes the development of healthy communication habits for dealing with conflicts in interpersonal relationships

Materials

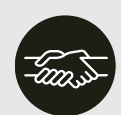
- Board with chalk/pencil
- Pencils for participants
- Appendices 1 «Making a Request», 2 «Practising Healthy Communication in Conflict Situations» and 3 «Practising Healthy Communication in Conflict Situations - Answers»

How it works

- Introduce the strategy for making a request (Activity Sheet 1)
- Distribute the scenarios to the participants and allow time to complete the exercise (Activity Sheet 2)
- Group feedback on the scenarios (Activity Sheet 3) and conclusion of the activity

Instructions

1. Print a copy of Activity Sheet 2 for each participant ahead of time.
2. Using Activity Sheet 1, present the strategy for making a request and write the four key elements of a request on the board as a visual aid.
3. Distribute Activity Sheet 2 and give the participants a few minutes to complete the scenarios (15-20 minutes).
4. Ask the participants to volunteer their answers and use Activity Sheet 3 to fill in any missing answers.
5. Conclude the activity.



ACTIVITY SHEET 1

Formulate the request

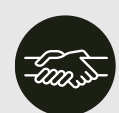
To make sure we are well understood during conflicts with our partner, this strategy can be used to formulate the request:

1. When... (explanation of the situation)
2. I feel... (explanation of emotions, thoughts, needs)
3. Because... (details about the situation)
4. I would like to... (resolution)

Using this wording helps the other person understand what you're trying to say. It's important to take the time to explain how you feel about this situation, because our feelings are our own and no one can argue with emotions, thoughts or perceived needs. In addition, talking in «I» statements is less confrontational for the person receiving the request. Telling the person what you expect by giving a concrete solution empowers them in the situation.

*Note: The person is not obliged to accept your request. Keep in mind that you just made a request, you did not give an order. If the person refuses, ask them to explain why, and listen to the answer. You can then try to find a compromise between the two positions.

- Compromise is the preferred solution to conflict. Through compromise, you find common ground that suits everyone and ensure that everyone's rights are respected.



ACTIVITY SHEET 2

Practising healthy communication in a conflict situation

Making a request

1. When... (explanation of the situation)
2. I feel... (explanation of emotions, thoughts, needs)
3. Because... (details about the situation)
4. I would like to... (resolution)

Scenario 1

You've been working from home for a month and a half now. Your spouse continues to work outside the home, and you feel that she doesn't understand your reality, since she often makes comments implying you're on vacation. You feel misunderstood, as well as abandoned because she leaves you at home alone. It makes you angry, because in your opinion working from home is much more demanding than at the office. You'd like to talk to her about it, but you feel guilty and you're not sure why.

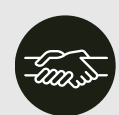
By using the request formulation technique seen earlier, how will you go about expressing your thoughts and feelings to your spouse?

When... _____

I feel... _____

Because... _____

I would like... _____



ACTIVITY SHEET 2

Practising healthy communication in a conflict situation

Scenario 2

You have an eating disorder and feel that your partner does not understand your reality. They try to help you, but are not going about it the right way. You feel they put pressure on you to eat and give you compliments whenever they see you putting something in your mouth. You feel watched, and meals have become an even more stressful time because you are more confronted with your eating disorder.

You'd like your partner to stop making comments about food and just offer a receptive ear when you feel the need to talk. You hesitate to discuss it with your spouse because you're afraid they'll take it badly, but you know you have to because the tension is mounting in your relationship.

By using the request formulation technique seen above, how will you express your thoughts and feelings to your partner?

When... _____

I feel... _____

Because... _____

I would like... _____



ACTIVITY SHEET 2

Practising healthy communication in a conflict situation

Scenario 3

Your mother often makes comments about your physical appearance, and it makes you uncomfortable. Even though you know she's trying to give you a compliment, it has the opposite effect because you feel like everyone is looking at you, and you start to analyze every little detail of your body.

You never know how to respond to these comments, because you feel uneasy. You'd like to let her know how you feel so that she stops commenting on your appearance.

By using the request formulation technique seen earlier, how will you express your thoughts and feelings to your mother?

When... _____

I feel... _____

Because... _____

I would like... _____



ACTIVITY SHEET 3

Practising healthy communication in a conflict situation - Answers

Scenario 1

When I'm working from home and you comment on my workload, **I feel** alone, misunderstood, abandoned and angry, **because** I feel like you don't recognize the difficulties I'm going through, when I having to work twice as hard because working from home is very demanding for me. **I'd like you** to try to make an effort to understand my situation, please.

Scenario 2

When you comment on what I eat, **I feel** watched and confronted with my eating disorder **because** it's already a situation that dominates my thoughts and when you talk to me about it, it makes me more stressed. **I'd like you** to stop talking to me about food and offer me a non-judgmental listening ear in the moments I find more difficult. That's really what would help me the most to get over the eating disorder.

Scenario 3

When you compliment me on the way I look, **I feel** judged and I start to observe all the details about my body, **because** I'm confronted with my physical appearance and I feel like that's all anyone ever sees. **I'd like you** to stop making comments like that, even if they're positive, because it would save me from the discomfort I feel with my body.



ACTIVITY SHEET 3

Conclusion

Ask the participants to share what they're taking away from the meeting in general, and then conclude by offering these suggestions:

It can be difficult to put a new behaviour into practice when you've been used to acting the opposite way for years. Learning a new behaviour, such as having healthy communication habits, may be time consuming and require practice.

Try to take it one step at a time and don't put too much pressure on yourself. Communication in your relationships won't become perfect overnight. It's normal to fall back into old habits from time to time. The important thing is to recognize it and try to do better next time.

It may require more effort at first, but you'll gradually find that there are benefits to practising healthy communication habits, whether in your intimate relationships, with your friends and family or with yourself.

