

Ask for What You Need

Couples communication and boundaries | Couples | 10 to 15 minutes

Turn a complaint into a specific and negotiable request.

Select one need that you can discuss safely. A request tells another person what would help and leaves room for their answer. It is more useful when the action is specific enough that both people can recognize it.

Start with a small observation

Describe one event without labels such as selfish, lazy, or always. Example: "We started discussing tomorrow while I was getting the children ready." Name your experience without assuming your partner intended it.

Make the action visible

Try: "I feel rushed, and I need a little focus. Would you talk with me for ten minutes after bedtime?" Ask for one action, place, or time. A request may be declined; a boundary concerns what you will do.

Practice the response too

Read your request aloud. Invite an alternative that respects both people. If the answer is no, identify a next step you control. Agreement obtained through fear, punishment, or pressure is not voluntary.

One observable event

My feeling and the need underneath it

My specific request

An acceptable alternative or next step I control