

Negotiating what I want

The DESC Approach

Adapted from Bower and Bower

Sometimes, when attempting to express our point of view, we can get caught up in being defensive or getting lost in what is not working for us. Below, is a simple framework to assist us to stay 'neutral' and present "what can be" (not what isn't) in a way that increases the chance there is a positive result.

Packing Your Message and Increasing Your Chances!

This is a framework for

- combining your feelings about an experience,
- thoughts you have about how you would like it changed and
- the positive outcome when the change has been made.

In conflict situations you usually only have a couple of minutes to clearly state your perspective. This framework will assist you to do this in a constructive, and often successful, way.

Each step is **one sentence** only.

Describe the situation you wish to change.

Be as specific as possible using neutral language (leave out judgements, interpretations and generalisations), e.g. *"Yesterday we were going to meet at 2.30pm and you did not arrive until 3.15pm."*

Express how you feel about the situation.

Briefly pause (take a breath) so the other party can understand and reflect on what you said, e.g. *"I feel frustrated."* (pause)

Specify what you would like different.

Again, keep it descriptive and neutral. The other person knows what you are feeling so now is the time to give a clear suggestion for the circumstance to change, e.g. *"When we make an arrangement I would like you to be on time or let me know you will be late."*

Consequences are the positive outcomes when the change has been made.

If possible, make the benefit mutual, e.g. *"Then I will feel appreciated and we can continue to work together positively"*.

Tips for effective negotiation

1. Find common ground

- Build connection and trust.
- Establish a clear purpose for the discussion.

2. State your interest

- Describe why you want a certain thing or outcome.
- Prepare yourself to the point where you can state this in one or two sentences.
- At this point, it is sometimes better not to state **how** you would like this achieved, as you have not got all the information yet. Listen to the other person.

3. Listen carefully

- Pay attention. Watch for non-verbal clues like body language.
- Silence is ok. It may be telling you the other person is willing to hear your point of view. Silence can unsettle an aggressive response; giving them time to withdraw comments that were not helpful.
- Ask clarifying questions. Show that you are interested in their position and you want to understand it. This can be to your advantage if you want to propose something that meets their needs as well as yours.
- Reframe. Reframing means taking a statement and making it more positive. It is a deliberate strategy to encourage individuals to look more positively at a situation. It can be used as a mutual challenge.

Here is an example ...

"I can't see the point in coming to these meetings. There is a lot of talk but at the end of the day you will just do what you want to regardless of what I say. I think my time is wasted here".

Questions to ask yourself to help you reframe might include:

What am I wanting?

How could this be achieved?

You also need to:

Identify the possible positive outcome if the change is made.

Focus on what could be – not what isn't.

4. Explore options

- Separate the person from any apparent problem.
- List possibilities
- Ask the other person if they can see a way for you to achieve your aims.
- Volunteer how your ideas may meet the other person's needs.
- Search for alternatives.

5. Summarise

- Ensure you are both on the same track.
- Confirm any decisions made.
- Check if there are any outstanding issues.

6. Develop a workable strategy/outcome that meet both parties' needs.

NB: Refer also to Effective Communication under Getting What I Need on the Resources menu.