

Centered for Life

Three-step Assertiveness approach

To be authentic and maximize your chance to connect with others
Solve Problems without Conflict / Grow closer together not further apart,

Expository Illustration

by Neil Schulenburg Ph. D. LPC

1. Acknowledge the other person.
Find something that relates to the issue at hand that is positive about the other person.
Example: *Ellen, I know that you love the children and want only what is best for them.*
2. State the problem in terms of your feelings.
Never use “you” language. That approach usually is taken as an attack and you will lose in your effort to communicate positively.
Say things like “ When _____ happens I feel _____.”
Spend plenty of time here. Your feelings are valid and important. If you did a good job with step one, the person will be likely to receive what you are saying.
Example: *When it's the end of the day and the children are full of energy I feel upset and on edge. I feel very alone and helpless.*
3. Make a suggestion.
Suggest a course of action that will lead to a positive resolution.
Example: *Can we sit down together and come up with some strategies to make this stressful time work better?*

How to Respond

1. Reflect back what you heard from your partner’s heart.
Make sure that your partner feels that they have been heard.
Example: *What I heard you say is that you have been upset and have felt far away from me.*
2. Connect with your partner
Take advantage of the opportunity for closeness by empathizing with your partner’s position.
Example: *(Taking your partner’s hand) I want you to know that it hurts me when I realize that you have been suffering in this way.*

Adapted from Three Step Communication technique by Kenneth Matheny, PhD