

# POSITIVE COMMUNICATION WORKSHEET



Don't expect fully formed positive communications to spring from your lips spontaneously. Like any new skill, it will probably feel awkward at first. Start by writing down what you want to say. Rehearse, fine-tune, role-play with someone else to see how it goes before you go live. Use this exercise to plan a request you would like to make of your partner.

## **Step 1:**

Write out your request, as you'd usually say it.

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## **Step 2:**

Now modify your request according to the seven elements of positive communication.

**Be Positive.** Tell your child what you want him to do rather than what you *don't* want him to do.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>Stop coming home so late.</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>Please come home in time for dinner.</i>
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Your positive request:

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**Be Brief.** Only one request at a time, and stick to your point. (No: "and another thing...!")

<u>First Try:</u> <i>You need to do a better job coming home on time. You're stopping at the bar first is driving me crazy.</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>I would like you to have dinner with us.</i>
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Your brief, positive request:

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**Be Specific.** Make sure you are clear about your request.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>It would be nice if you cared.</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>Coming home on time would really help me with the kids.</i>
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Your specific, brief, positive request:

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**Label your feelings.** Identify a feeling and describe it without being too intense or lengthy. Bonus points for also including a positive feeling.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>It makes me crazy how little you seem to care about things!</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>I feel frustrated when you stop at the bar first. I'd really appreciate your help with dinner.</i>
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Your feeling(s) labeled:

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**Offer an understanding statement.** Use this strategy to help your child feel heard and non-defensive.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>I'm not asking anything of you that I don't ask of everyone else in this house.</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>I know you feel stressed after work and think a drink will help you unwind.</i>
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Your understanding statement:

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**Take partial responsibility.** This is not saying it's your fault, but it's helpful to find a piece of the problem, however small, that you can share.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>I have a job too and it's not my job to take care of everyone!</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>I realize I haven't told you how much it bothers me. I can't expect you to read my mind!</i>
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Your acceptance of partial responsibility:

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**Offer to help.** See if there is anything you can do to help your partner achieve your request.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>I can't do everything around here!</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>Would it help to have a few minutes before dinner to unwind?</i>
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Your offer to help:

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Now try putting it all together. You can play with the order and wording to make it sound as natural as possible. Keep in mind that even the most perfectly scripted request won't guarantee the outcome you want. It will, however, increase the odds of being heard.

### **Tips for practice:**

1. Start with small-ticket items that are less important; also start by practicing in the context of safer or easier relationships (practice with a friend or sister instead of your partner).
2. You don't need to use all seven steps in every interaction. (Though trying all of them, at least for practice, can help you get the hang of it.)
3. Watch the timing of when you deliver your request. It should not be when your partner is under the influence or hung over, and you both should be in reasonably good moods and not rushing off somewhere.
4. Try not to get discouraged if it doesn't go so well the first few or many times. It takes effort and practice to get out of negative ruts. We believe—because research shows—it's worth it.