

Making Requests for Respect

With LaShelle Lowe-Charde

Respect is central to any relationship. To know that others honor you, consider your feelings and needs, and how their behavior affects you lays the foundation for an enjoyable relationship.

When asking for respect here are, at least, two basic things to consider. The first is getting clear about your interpretations of other's behavior. The second is expressing clearly what does and doesn't meet your need for respect.

Here is a simple example for the first. You are having a party in your home and your partner spills something on the kitchen floor during the evening. Later, when your guests are gone, you notice your partner has not cleaned up the spill. The truth is that, in this moment, barring an earlier comment from your partner, you don't know why your partner hasn't cleaned it. Despite this, your mind makes a leap and says, "They just leave the mess for me. That's so disrespectful!" When you can catch this as an assumption rather than the truth, you might be able to set it aside long enough to ask your partner what kept them from cleaning the mess. If they say, "I expect you to clean it." You would likely have a conversation about respect. If your partner says, "Oh, I forgot about it. I will get it now", you may or may not have a conversation about order or cleanliness. In sum, when your need for respect comes up, take a moment to check in with your interpretations and notice if it would be helpful to get clarity about the other's intentions before believing your thoughts.

Other situations are more straightforward. For example, you share your report in a meeting at work and your co-worker says, "Duh, we all knew that. Your reports aren't that good." In this case, you are likely clear that, regardless of your co-worker's world, it doesn't meet your need for respect to have "duh" as a part of your interaction.

Here is where you need the more subtle skill of making requests that meet your need for respect. Telling your co-worker not to use the word "duh" might be helpful in the short-term, but in the long run it is important to say what does work for you. Specific and doable requests might sound like this:

"Jacob, when you say "duh", it doesn't meet my need for respect. Would you be willing to tell me specifically what doesn't work for you rather than saying "duh"?"

"I value respectful communication. Would you be willing to say what specifically what you want to be different?"

"It gives me a sense of respect when I know you are going to be late. Could you text me if you are going to be more than 15 minutes late."

Making requests becomes easier when you observe what is happening when your need for respect is met. This is likely happening a lot. Choose specific situations or relationships to notice the details of what meets your need for respect.

Practice

Take a moment now to identify three specific behaviors of someone that met your need for respect this week.