

Say What You Mean: A Mindful Approach to Nonviolent Communication

Useful Communication Phrases

Requests for Dialogue

- “Would you be willing to take some time to have a conversation with me about ...[topic]?”
- “Could we sit down together and look at what we both need to see if we can find a way to work this out? (or: to see if we can find a solution that works for both of us?)”

Offering Empathy

- “Let me see if I’m understanding. What I’m getting is ...?”
- “I want to make sure I’m getting it. It sounds like ...?”
- “Here’s what I’m hearing... Is that right?”

Eliciting Information

- “Tell me More.”
- “Anything else you’d like me to understand about this?”
- “Could you tell me one or two things I might say or do right now that would help you to feel more understood / more heard?”

Requests for Empathy

- “What would be most helpful for me right now is just to be heard. Would you be willing to listen for a bit and tell me what you’re hearing?”
- “I just said a lot and I’m not sure it all came out the way I was intending. Could you tell me what you got from all that?”
- “What I just said is really important to me. Would you be willing to tell me what you’re getting?”

Inserting a Pause

- “I’d like a moment to gather my thoughts.”
- “I’m not sure. Let me think about that.”
- “This sounds important. I’d like to give it some time.”
- “I’d like some time to take that in. Can we pause here for a moment?”

Taking a Break

- “I’d really like to continue our conversation, and I’m not in the best frame of mind to do that right now. Can we take a break and come back to this . . . ?”
- “I’d really like to hear what you have to say, and I’m feeling a little overwhelmed, so I don’t think I’ll be able to listen well. Could we take a break and continue tomorrow?”
- “I’m committed to figuring this out together and don’t quite have the space to think clearly now. Can we put this on hold until . . . ?”
- “I want to finish our conversation, and I don’t think anything else I say right now will be useful. Could we take a break until . . .”
- “I’d really like to hear what you have to say, but the way you’re saying it is making that very difficult. I wonder if you’d be willing to . . .
... try explaining what’s happening for you in a different way?”
... take a break until we’ve both had a chance to reflect on this?”
... let me have a moment to tell you what’s going on for me?”

Interrupting

- “Let me make sure I’m still with you . . .”
- “I want to make sure I’m getting everything you said. Can we pause for a moment so I can make sure I’m following it all?”
- “I want to hear the rest of what you’re saying, and I’m starting to lose track. Can I summarize what I’m hearing so far?”
- “I want you to continue, but I’m a bit confused. May I ask a question?”
- “I want to keep listening, and there’s something I want to clarify. May I respond for a moment?”

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Redirecting

- “I’m glad you mention that. Before we go there, I’d like to say one or two more things about . . .”
- “I appreciate you bringing that up. I want to discuss that in a minute, but first I’d like to touch on . . .”
- “Yes, that’s important. Can we finish talking about this first, and come back to that in a moment?”

Hearing No

- “I’m curious to know, why not? Could you share more?”
- “What’s leading you to say no? Do you have other ideas?”
- “Can we take some time to brainstorm ideas that could work for both of us?”
- “What would you need to know, or what could I do, to make it possible for you to say yes?”

Saying No

- “I’d like to say yes, and here’s what’s getting in the way of that right now.”
- “I’m hearing how important this is to you, and I’m not seeing how I can make it work given that I also have a need for... Could we explore some other options that might work for you?”
- “I can’t agree to that without a significant cost to myself in terms of . . . [other needs]. Would it work for you if we tried...instead?”

Requests for “Do-overs”

- “That didn’t come out quite right. Can I try that again?”
- “I feel like we got off to the wrong start. Could we start over?”
- “I’m concerned some of the things I said aren’t helping. May I try again?”
- “Things didn’t really go the way I was hoping when we talked. Could we try having the conversation again?”