

NEED BEHIND THE NO PROCESS (DYAD PRACTICE) HANDOUT

Hearing and saying no with empathy and compassion

This Need Behind the No (NBN) process and practice often goes with making solution requests to resolve disagreements or conflicts (versus connection requests, which are oriented toward furthering empathic understanding and connection). People often find both hearing a “no” to their request and saying “no” to someone’s request to be difficult and sometimes triggers the Fight-Flight-Freeze reaction. NBN helps navigate this experience.

Need Behind the No Process

1. Clarify the specific request and need(s) that the request is attempting to meet.
2. Connect empathically with the need(s) that are behind the “no” to the request. What needs are keeping the person from saying yes?
3. Search for a new request/strategy to get the needs met for self and other.

Partner Exercise: Hearing “No” with Empathic Communication Skills

1. Person A, think of a situation and tell your practice partner (Person B) the role they will play as you make a request of them.
2. Person A, make a solution request (specific, action language), connecting your request to a need or needs behind your request.
3. Person B, say “no” in some way. Person A can tell Person B how you’d like them to say no, or you could just ask them to improvise and make up their no response.
4. Person A, empathize with Person B’s response (using Elements of Empathy to guess and reflect back what you’re hearing), getting to needs keeping them from saying yes.
5. Person A, now either make a new solution request seeking to get the needs met for both of you, or ask Person B if they have an idea or request of what might meet the needs for both of you.

Partner Exercise: Saying “No” with Empathic Communication Skills

1. Person A, think of a situation and tell Person B the role they will play and the request you want them to make of you.
2. Person B, make the request of Person A.
3. Person A, empathize with Person B (Elements of Empathy), hearing the need(s) behind their request.
4. Person A, express what need(s) are keeping you from saying yes.
5. Person A, now either make a new solution request seeking to get the needs met for both of you, or ask Person B if they have an idea or request of what might meet the needs for both of you.

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