

COACHING REQUEST VS. DEMAND HANDOUT

1. Usually I move into the Request distinction with my client in a separate session from going through OFN together. So, I'd start this new session with a check in of how they are doing and what situation they want to work on.
2. We would move through OFN again, reinforcing last session's learning, and then move into Request.
3. From awareness and deep connection with needs, I ask what they would like to ask for from the other person in their situation, what would "make life more wonderful for them" as Marshall Rosenberg would say. As they respond, I give feedback on what they're saying by sharing my understanding of making requests specific, doable, action language, and what we do want, not just what we don't. I ask them questions that lead toward more concreteness and specificity of what they'd like, and I always try to couch what I say in terms of how I see or think about these things rather than telling them the way it is. We can talk about how empowering it can be to make requests.
4. Sometimes people hesitate on saying what they want because they quickly tell themselves the other person wouldn't do it. To this I suggest that they don't worry for the moment about what the other person would say, and instead free their mind to let out any ideas that arise for us to have a look at together.
5. Sometimes they just draw a blank and have no idea what they'd like to ask for. When I hear this I start with empathy and acknowledgment, saying to them it's very common and understandable to not know what to request. Many of us are so unused to this. It's radical to find validity and validation in having needs, and then it can feel equally radical to think we can ask for our needs to be met. It can also feel scary. Perhaps we'll interpret the other person's response as rejection, and we'll feel shame, hurt, disconnection.
6. At this point I like asking people to go into a guided meditation with me, quieting their mind, letting go of trying to think of anything, particularly of a request. And instead just focus on their breath, body sensations, and their needs in this situation. It's totally fine if nothing comes. Then I ask them to let me know if they see any images or ideas float through their mind that they would normally quickly dismiss. If something does emerge, we work with it.
7. Then I like to ask people if they have any requests of themselves to meet their needs. We talk about how this may seem strange but that there's lots of good evidence for the validity and reality of different aspects of ourselves. I like using this framing of request of self to get into the distinction with demand. If we pay attention we can feel in our body when we have a "yes" or "no" to a request, including from ourselves. We can talk about the cost of saying yes when we actually feel no, both with ourselves and with others. This can lead to talking about the value of acting from willingness, and the joy of giving and receiving, rather than fear, shame, guilt, obligation, duty, have to, should, etc.

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