

# The “Sandwich Technique”

## COMMUNICATING YOUR NEEDS IN A HEALTHY WAY

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Do you find it hard to get your partner to hear you? Try the Sandwich Technique below for every difficult conversation you need to have. You may find that you can get your point across easily without having to get into any arguments.

### First Step: Find a good time to talk

It's best **not** to try to communicate in the heat of the moment. Find a quiet, alone time when you are both calm and peaceful. And be considerate of the other person's ability to have a conversation:

Ask if it's an ok time for the other person to talk. If it's not, table it for another time or reschedule it.

1. Give a compliment or some kind of positive that generates a heartfelt connection to the other person. Make the first sentence a loving connector that has something to do with this issue. You can also look deeper at the other person's intention – it's usually coming from a good place even if the behavior/outcome is destructive. *“I (appreciate/admire/enjoy/love/believe in/understand your..., etc.).”*
2. Share your own feelings. Your fears, anxieties, sadness, confusion, etc. in response to this issue. (Be careful here not to point a finger in blame but to only speak about your own feelings that come about in response to the situation. Try not to use the word, “you” at all.) *“I feel/felt (confused, angry, distraught, jealous, upset, angry, sad, hurt, etc.) when such and such happened.”*
3. Make a request. *“So, I want/need...(to have this happen)”*.
4. Give another compliment. (same as in Step 1)

Here is an example from one of my clients: Her husband doesn't like it when she rewashes a dish he thinks he's already washed well enough. Last night, when she went to re-wash a dish, he got mad at her and called her “OCD”. So we worked on a sandwich. I encouraged her to talk to him at a time when they were both calm. She chose to do this at night when they were both in bed after the kids were asleep. She then asked if it was ok to talk about what happened at dinner the other night. He said, “what is it?” So she took that as “ok”.

1. Compliment: She said, “I really love how you make dinner for all of us so often.”
2. Her feelings: “And I really can't stand it when we use a plate that the dog's licked off of. It really grosses me out.”
3. Request: “So I need to be able to wash a plate that I think is dirty.”
4. Compliment: “I really don't want to make you feel bad when I do that but I really need to do that sometimes.” (This was not a compliment per say but it did show my good intention to not want to hurt him.) His response was, “Ok.”

So that's it. It's pretty simple but the hard part is figuring out how to say what you need to say without any hint of blame in it. You are not communicating anything about someone else's bad behavior. Instead, you are communicating your own desires and insecurities while at the same time, keeping the bond with the other person by affirming & expressing your good feelings about them.

I recommend you try this technique by rehearsing all of the steps both on paper and memorizing it before you use it.

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