



Expressing your healthcare needs with clarity and confidence is the first step toward getting those needs met.

This exercise will take you through a simple, three-step process for clearly stating your needs in healthcare situations.

Here's the basic formula:

Thanks + What you're feeling + What you need
= A Clearly Stated Need

Let's walk through the steps using an example from the previous exercise. Remember the doctor who spent a lot of time looking at the computer during the patient's appointment? With every step, we'll add to the statement until we have a clearly stated need.

[\(Click here to revisit the scenario from the last activity.\)](#)

Step 1 - Acknowledgement

Let them know you understand they're trying to help you. Thank them for their help.

*"I know you are working really hard to help me out here.
I feel so fortunate to have you as my doctor."*

+

Step 2 - What you're feeling

State what you're feeling, making sure to acknowledge that the feeling is yours and yours alone.

*"I know you are working really hard to help me out here. I feel so fortunate to have you as my doctor.
Even so, I'm having a hard time opening up to you while you're looking at the computer."*

+

Step 3 - What you need

Ask for what you need.

*"I know you are working really hard to help me out here. I feel so fortunate to have you as my doctor. Even so, I'm having a hard time opening up to you while you're looking at the computer. **Can we talk about finding a way around this problem?**"*

= A Clearly Stated Need



Example: A Clearly Stated Need

Here's another example using the scenario when the patient felt that her husband spent too much time talking to the doctor at the last appointment.

Step 1 - Acknowledgement

*"I am so grateful that you took the time to come to my doctor's appointment.
I could tell that you were really trying to help."*

+

Step 2 - What you're feeling

*"I am so grateful that you took the time to come to my doctor's appointment. I could tell that you were really trying to help.
Even so, I didn't feel that I got everything out of the appointment that I had hoped for."*

+

Step 3 - What you need

*"I am so grateful that you took the time to come to my doctor's appointment. I could tell that you were really trying to help.
Even so, I didn't feel that I got everything out of the appointment that I had hoped for. If I make a list of exactly what I need
you to do during my appointments, would you be willing to work on it with me?"*

= A Clearly Stated Need

✓ Make the most of this exercise

A few tips that will help you use this exercise to communicate clearly in healthcare situations:

- **Acknowledge best intentions.** Try to remember that you can't really know what's going on in someone else's head. For example, if a staff member is rude, you may not feel like they're trying to help you at all. It might feel dishonest to say, "I know you're trying to help me." But the truth is, you don't really know that person's intentions. When you thank them, it may help them find a way to listen to you and become more helpful.
- **Peaceful doesn't mean passive.** You may notice that this three-step process creates a message that is not angry or demanding. But it's also not passive. It's a style of communicating that will help you get what you need without creating hostility. In fact, this process can sometimes help us get our needs met and make our interactions more rewarding.
- **Be sure to "own" your feelings.** It can be easy to say, "You're making me feel ..." or "I can't do this because you're doing that." But when you recognize that your thoughts, feelings, and actions are driven by you—no one else—it's a powerful way of regaining control. Stating your feelings this way also helps minimize conflict, and that makes getting your problem solved more likely.
- **It gets easier with practice!** Remember that learning to communicate confidently is a skill that might require letting go of some old habits. If you take the time to practice clear and confident communication, you'll find that it will eventually come more naturally.

Now it's your turn! Page 3 of this worksheet provides the prompts and space for you to practice writing out your own needs in clear, confident language.



Worksheet: Stating Needs Clearly

Use these steps anytime you need to clarify the best way to state what you need.

Step 1 - Acknowledgement

Let them know you understand they're trying to help you. Thank them for their help.

Step 2 - What you're feeling

State what you're feeling, making sure to acknowledge that the feeling is yours and yours alone.

Step 3 - What you need

Ask for what you need.

Step 1 - Acknowledgement

Let them know you understand they're trying to help you. Thank them for their help.

Step 2 - What you're feeling

State what you're feeling, making sure to acknowledge that the feeling is yours and yours alone.

Step 3 - What you need

Ask for what you need.

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