

# Blueprints for Change

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## THE ART OF ASKING

"Ask and Ye Shall Receive" may or may not be your experience. Perhaps it works some of the time and at other times, perhaps not. Whether in a business circumstance or a personal relationship, do you find it difficult to ask for what you want or need? How easily are you able to get it?

Many people seem unable to get what they want. More often than not, it's because they don't ask for it or don't make the request in a manner that is conducive to another person giving it.

Here are some guidelines to help you get what you ask for, whenever possible:

### **Give yourself permission to ask for help or guidance.**

Have you sometimes regretted failing to speak and wished that you had? You have the right to ask for anything you need, whether it is help with a project, chores at home, an evening out, etc. We hold ourselves back far too often. Yes, sometimes the circumstances are difficult but more often than not, that is the excuse we use to keep from sounding stupid, feeling rejection or some other negative emotion. More often, the real limitation is within ourselves.

### **Ask when there's still time for the help to be meaningful.**

Asking when it's already too late adds to the stress of the situation. Offloading your responsibility and trying to shift the blame onto another person builds resentment. You may receive the help but what is the emotional cost?

### **Think of obvious resources for your request first.**

Asking your spouse, who is in the middle of balancing his check book, to drop everything and change a light bulb, while your teenage son is sitting in the room watching TV, is not likely to promote a quick "yes".

### **Let go of the outcome.**

If you don't expect either a positive or a negative reply, you won't be disappointed. This allows the person you are asking to give you his/her honest answer, not one based on an expectation.

### **Don't show displeasure if you don't get a positive response.**

Even if you don't like the answer to your request, be gracious. Displaying any negative or hostile sort of behavior indicates that you were making a demand rather than a request. Demands are immediately responded to with resistance. However, do explain the impact the response has on you. The key is to honor the response and the reasons for it.

### **Clarify a negative response.**

Perhaps your request wasn't clear. Meaning depends on context and the way in which an individual processes the information. Get to the heart of the matter by moving past any negative emotion and finding out the real interests of the other person.

### **Don't forget to say "thank you."**

Everyone wants to feel valued. Even though the request may have been relatively inconsequential, a few simple words of appreciation - or better yet - letting the person know how much the help meant, will go a long way to getting you a positive response next time. The more you appreciate the other person, the more he/she will respond positively in the future.

### **Most people are not psychic.**

Although we often feel that the other person **should** do a certain thing without us having to ask, that person has his or her own priorities and goals. He/she is not intentionally being mean, it's just that his/her mind is on other things.

### **Nagging is never appropriate.**

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Repeated requests are a way of trying to get what you want by wearing down the other person. This sometimes works in the short-term but inevitably backfires because both people build up anger and resentment. If you need to repeat a request, follow the guidelines above.

### **A request granted can make a friend.**

If you want to befriend someone, ask that person to do you a favor. This does not mean a favor that is purely your attempt to get rid of something you don't want to do yourself. If the request is granted, the person tends to be friendlier in the future. By merely asking, you have elevated that individual's self-esteem -- were he or she not worthy of your request, you would not have asked.

Change begins when one becomes "aware" and "conscious" of reasons for not receiving the things one wants. If the problem lies in the asking, then the above guidelines can help you understand some of the barriers and how to focus on alternative and more productive behavior.

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