

hitched

life advice

Ready, Aim, and Fire!

Learn how to state your needs and wants with this simple method.

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When you have the right approach, getting what you want can be direct and effective.

“ There is a vast difference between standing up for what you want and need at the time you want it, and standing up for what you want and need after you haven't gotten it. ”

Congratulations! You've finally realized you're not life's doormat, and you're ready to stand up for yourself. That's great! Only you find yourself caught in a dilemma: either you state your needs in such a way that your spouse doesn't pay attention to you, or you come off like a raging bull and your spouse pays attention to you, but it ends up in fights or tears.

Neither approach is satisfactory. What to do? Simple: Ready, aim and fire.

What does that mean?

Be Ready

"Ready" means check your timing. There is a vast difference between standing up for what you want and need at the time you want it, and standing up for what you want and need after you haven't gotten it. For example, you realize it bothers you that your spouse is always late. Paying attention to your timing means saying to your spouse before the next time they might be late:

"It's very uncomfortable for me when you are late. I would appreciate it if you could make arrangements to be on time," rather than waiting until they are (once again) late and then, being thoroughly disgusted and frustrated having checked your watch every 5 minutes, blowing up at them.

Your spouse may still choose to be late, but now they know how you feel about it, and you have a basis for discussion.

Aim

Be clear about exactly what it is you want and need, and set up your request in such a way that you're likely to get it. Don't say, "You know, it's sort of a hassle, I mean it's not a big deal or anything, but it would be kinda nice if you could get to the meeting/restaurant/ballpark on time."

All your spouse is going to hear is "not a big deal"! Be clear. It is a big deal to you. It makes you uncomfortable, it interferes with your happiness. So say: "It makes me uncomfortable ..." and then set up your request with satisfaction in mind.

In this example you might ask what you can do to facilitate your spouse's timeliness, or explore with your spouse why they tend to be late (maybe they aren't even aware of it!), and so forth. To aim is to be clear about what you want and assume a problem solving approach to getting it, rather than waffling around what you want and then punishing yourself or your spouse when you don't get it.

Fire

Be direct and straightforward with both your body language and speech when you state your want. Look your spouse in the eye, keep your body still, don't wiggle or squirm or clench your fists, it's distracting. State your want in a firm clear voice. Don't turn your request into a whine or a demand, be direct.

Be assertive, not aggressive. State your wants and needs positively in a clear and direct manner, don't defend your needs tooth and claw after the fact (it's bloody and rarely works), or sidle up to your needs in roundabout diluted fashion and then be surprised that no one hears you. You deserve the best life has to offer, so:

Ready, aim and fire!

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