

## The 7-Step Approach to Influence Your Partner to Change

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Everyone has something they'd like to change in their partner. Unfortunately too many partners believe, "If I want a change, my partner is obligated to do it 'if they really love me'." Frequently this creates quite a power struggle. Here is a 7-step process to create a change in your partner. The key to the success of this process is that it makes your partner want to change - instead of feeling coerced. Why? Because your gain will not feel like their loss.

Here's what you do.

1. **MAKE A LIST** of the top three behaviors your partner does that annoy you. For example, leaves messes around house; pouts; doesn't do their share of household tasks, etc. Then, select the one problem that has the best chance of your partner responding to your discomfort. You will increase your chances for success dramatically by focusing on one problem at a time. Let's go for a big one here and say the problem is that your partner is not pulling their weight around the house.

2. **DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM** in clear detail. This includes what your partner does and your reaction to the problem. For example: "Honey, there is a problem I need to discuss with you. When you come home from work and start reading the mail, change your clothes, turn on the news, return a phone call without looking around and noticing the kids are cranky, squalling for dinner, and I'm up to my neck in getting dinner ready, I see you as a blind and insensitive clod. This problem has persisted for over a year now with little relief in sight."

3. **DESCRIBE YOUR REACTION** to the problem. This means what you think, what you feel and what you do that you are not proud of when you think and feel this way.

"When you act so oblivious, I think you care much more about responding to your own needs first and foremost, and you pitch in only when it is convenient for you. I feel angry, alone, and resentful. When I feel that way I end up being chilly to you and withdrawing any spontaneous signs of affection. I don't like how I react but that is what I have been doing."

Here is the "formula" for describing the problem.

A) You have specified the behavior of "not pulling his weight" by giving specific examples.

B) You have given your reaction to it by stating: "when you do (the behavior) I think \_\_\_\_\_ (you're inconsiderate...) and feel \_\_\_\_\_ (angry, alone, resentful), and then I do \_\_\_\_\_ (withhold affection). It is important to let your partner know what your complete response is to the behavior that is a problem. Especially let them know what you do when you think and feel the way you do. This really informs your partner of the consequence to them when they do the undesired behavior. Include in your reaction the meaning of the problem for you. For example, not pulling their weight represents not being loved, respected, or valued.

4. BE EMPATHETIC. Tell your partner why you think that would be hard for them to change the undesired behavior. This lets them know you see the problem from both perspectives and that you have an appreciation for what you're asking them to change. For example, "Honey, I think pitching in when you get home would be difficult because you feel depleted and want some time to yourself in order to regenerate. I think pitching in at the level I want is a lot to ask of you."

5. DESCRIBE HOW YOU WILL HELP. Because you're not just going to make a request and then hope for the best, (this hasn't been successful in the past, neither has been nagging or pleading) the next step is to describe what you will do to help your partner make the change you want. For example, "Honey, your pitching in is so important to me when you get home that I will do \_\_\_\_\_ ." (Fill in here what you think will be a high motivator for your partner to make the requested change.)

6. ASK IF THEY ARE WILLING to make the change you're requesting. They may agree to all or part or none of your request. They might say "no" to you but would be more willing to consider the change if you offered a different motivator or inducement to change. Then you can decide if it is worth your efforts.

7. FIND OUT WHY. Regardless of whether they are willing to change or not, ask why. Knowing why they are willing to change will help you understand what motivates them. You'll be able to encourage them more effectively along the way. If they don't want to change, finding out why will help you determine how to move forward. In that case you still have 2 more options. One, you can ask if this is a temporary or more permanent condition.



If it seems there will be no change for now, let them know the consequences - how you think, feel and act - and then drop it for now. The second option is to go to the second problem on your list and repeat the sequence described above.

Of course the biggest improvements in a couples' relationship come when both people change and grow. But there are often things you'd like your partner to change, and this format helps you do it in a way that supports both of you.