Communication Strategies for Collaboration

Observe • Feel • Identify • Request

A structured path to clearer conversations.



The OFNR framework - Observation, Feelings, Needs, Request - comes from Marshall Rosenberg's model of Nonviolent Communication (NVC). It supports difficult or important conversations with clarity, empathy, and respect.

The goal is authentic expression while staying open to collaboration rather than conflict or defensiveness.

THE OFNR CONVERSATION MAP

OBSERVE	FEEL	NEED	REQUEST
What happened?	What am I feeling?	What matters here?	What am I asking for?

Clarity and empathy can exist in the same conversation.

Steps 1 + 2: Observation & Feelings

Start with facts. Then name your authentic emotional response.

Step 1: Observation

"What did I see or hear?"

Share the facts of the situation without judgment, exaggeration, or interpretation. This creates a neutral ground for conversation.

SHIFT THE LANGUAGE

Instead: "You're always late."

Try: "You arrived 15 minutes after our scheduled meeting time."

WHY IT HELPS

- Builds trust because the other person does not feel accused or judged.
- Creates clarity by separating fact from opinion.
- Keeps the conversation grounded in what actually happened.

Step 2: Feelings

"How do I feel about what I observed?"

Express your authentic emotional response using feeling words, not thoughts or interpretations.

SHIFT THE LANGUAGE

Instead: "I feel disrespected." (interpretation)

Try: "I feel frustrated and anxious." (emotion)

WHY IT HELPS

- Humanizes the conversation by showing vulnerability.
- Reduces blame and invites empathy.
- Helps the other person understand your experience rather than feeling attacked.

PRACTICE: FACT OR STORY?

Write one sentence describing only what an objective observer could have seen or heard.

PRACTICE: NAME THE FEELING

Choose 1-2 emotion words that describe your internal response without assigning blame.

Steps 3 + 4: Needs & Request

Connect the feeling to what matters, then invite a specific next step.

Step 3: Needs

"What need, value, or desire of mine is connected to this feeling?"

Link your feelings to an underlying need, value, or priority. Needs are universal - such as respect, safety, clarity, rest, or trust.

EXAMPLE

"I feel frustrated because I need reliability and trust in our teamwork."

WHY IT HELPS

- Moves the conversation deeper than surface-level complaints.
- Highlights what truly matters, rather than getting stuck on behaviors.
- Shifts attention to shared human needs, making it easier to relate.

Step 4: Request

"What specific, doable action am I asking for?"

Ask for something concrete and positive that the other person can say "yes" to. Avoid demands or vague requests.

EXAMPLE

"Would you be willing to text me if you know you'll be more than 5 minutes late?"

WHY IT HELPS

- Turns conflict into collaboration by inviting partnership.
- Gives clear direction for how the need can be met.
- Creates a practical next step for resolution.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: A FULL OFNR CONVERSATION

OBSERVATION	"In our last two meetings, you arrived after the scheduled start time."
FEELINGS	"I felt frustrated and anxious."
NEEDS	"Because I value reliability and want to make sure our team's time is respected."
REQUEST	"Would you be willing to let me know in advance if you're running behind so we can adjust?"

Why OFNR Works

The framework supports clarity, empathy, collaboration, and authentic voice.

Reduces conflict Avoids blame and defensiveness.	**Builds empathy** Creates space for mutual understanding.	**Clarifies priorities** Helps people communicate what truly matters.
Encourages collaboration Requests foster solutions instead of stalemates.	**Empowers authentic voice** People learn to speak their truth with compassion.	**Creates a next step** Moves the conversation from tension toward action.

COACH'S NOTE

OFNR isn't about "scripting" every conversation. It's about cultivating a mindset: observe without judgment, express feelings honestly, connect to needs, and invite collaboration through requests. With practice, it becomes a natural way of relating that strengthens trust and respect in every relationship.

TAKING ACTION: Practice role-playing an OFNR scenario during your next coaching session. Or draft a real conversation before you have it.

Observation

Feelings

Needs

Request