7. THE BEHAVIOUR CHANGE REQUEST

Adapted from “[Making Marriage Simple](http://makingmarriagesimple.com/)” by Harville Hendrix & Helen laKelly Hunt

**Truth #7: Negativity is a Wish in Disguise**

The Behaviour Change Request (BCR) is the key to transforming your frustrations with your partner into growth. Frustrations are really hidden wishes. They are hiding what you really want and are not getting from your partner.

This exercise teaches you how to share these frustrations/wishes in ways that will make it easier for your partner to hear. It gives you a format to use when making requests. It is through **the making, meeting and receiving** of these **requests** that **you and your partner grow**.

Choose a frustration you’ve experienced with your partner. Start with a molehill, NOT the mountain. You want to set both of you up for success by using the steps below.

1. Ask for an appointment. The Speaker says something like “I’d like to talk with you about a request I have. Is now OK?” If they say no, ask “When are you free for 10 minutes?” Then it’s up to you to return at the appointed time to make the request.
2. Briefly describe your frustration in one or two sentences at most. This is the same as the Dialogue process. Example: Speaker “When you come home later than you say you will” (what you see and hear)

“I think that something has happened to you” (what you make up about it)

“And I get worried and frustrated” (what you make yourself feel about it)

Listener recaps what the Speaker said: “You get worried and frustrated when I come home later than I say. Is that right?”The Speaker confirms and the Listener asks; “Is there more?” Speaker: “Yes, I worry that you might have had a car accident and I get anxious”. The Listener then recaps this new statement and if the Speaker confirms that the Listener got it, the Speaker feels heard and understood.

1. The Listener then asks: “How can I help with that right now? Give me some specific thing to do or say.”

The Speaker then makes a clear behavioural request: “I’d like you to promise to text or ‘phone me if you’re going to be later than you said and give me a specific time when you’ll be home. Then I’d like you to make sure you come home at that time”.

1. The Listener then recaps the behavioural request. They now have 3 options for how to respond:
2. They can say **“Yes”** to the whole request: “Yes I will text or call you with the new time and make sure I come home then.”
3. They can say **“Maybe”**. Clearly explain which part you can do and which part you may not be able to do. Give a clear reason why not **and supply an alternative proposition**: “I can text or call if I’m going to be later and give you a specific time. Mostly this should not be a problem. But occasionally you know that I get last minute emergencies that need to be attended to immediately. If that’s the case, I will tell you as soon as I can to keep you in the loop”.
4. They can say **“No**, **this is why, and here’s my alternative proposition”:** “No sweetheart, I can’t always do that. You know that emergencies occur often at work and these aren’t predictable. I won’t be able to contact you personally, but I will make sure to tell the nurse to text or call you about what the emergency is and how it’s going. How is that for you?”

As the Listener, it’s a good idea to tape the request you’ve agreed to on the wall or put it in your phone so you can see it every day.

**Remember: Taking small steps with the behaviour change request empowers you both. This makes you want to take on the next issue. Success builds on success.**