

CHAPTER II: ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED



“If you really loved me, you would just know!”

This sentiment reflects one of the most harmful myths of communication. This myth prevents useful communication from taking place and leads to expectations that no one could possibly meet. The broken expectations that follow cause hurt and pain. If we pull back the curtain of this myth to look behind it, we will see the truth: *no one can read your mind.*

When we grow close to someone, we sometimes feel like we merge together into one person. We've seen many of our friends treat couples as if they were one person with the same wants and needs. It happens on the inside of a relationship, too. We sometimes feel that the level of closeness we have achieved

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will somehow let us merge our minds together. If that were possible, we'd have written a book on mind-merging instead of a book on communication! The only way to make your wants and needs known is to communicate clearly and openly: to *ask for what you need*.

For example, take a wife who wishes her husband would occasionally buy her flowers. She talks with her friends and complains about her husband. "He just doesn't understand me," she says. "If he really loved me and really knew me, he would know what I want." Her friends will console her and commiserate with her, because they all buy into the myth. She doesn't even consider *asking* him for flowers or *telling* him what she wants, because that would feel like giving in. She feels that if she has to ask, it somehow doesn't count. That would be losing the "he can read my mind" game. If she loses this game, she doesn't get what she wants, but she feels *justified* in being disappointed, because this is the way the game is played.

This is a game with no winners! No matter what expectations she has, he's not going to read her mind. He doesn't have an opportunity to make her happy and she's setting herself up to be disappointed. Why on earth do we do this?

Here's what might happen if she asked for what she wanted:

"Honey, it would make me really happy if you would occasionally buy me flowers. It would make me feel loved, considered, and appreciated," she tells her husband.



“Oh! I didn’t know you liked flowers. I’d be more than happy to,” he replies. He buys her flowers the very next day.

She feels surprised that she appreciates the flowers as much as she would have if she had received them as a spontaneous gift. She expected that it wouldn’t count if she had to ask for it, but that was another part of the harmful myth she used to buy into. By communicating with her husband and asking for what she wanted, she was happy instead of disappointed.

Kyeli’s Story: Let’s Talk About Text, Baby!

When Pace is working, she hyperfocuses to the exclusion of everything else. I felt like she would go to work and completely forget about me for eight hours a day, to the point of resenting me for any interruptions. I didn’t like feeling that way; I needed to feel special to her during those hours. I felt afraid to ask for attention, because she reacted with irritation when interrupted from her “work mode.”

I spent a long time talking to everyone but Pace about this situation. Several of our friends kept suggesting I talk to Pace, that I ask for what I need from her, but I was stubborn. Finally, a friend dared me to try asking her anyway. If it devalued anything Pace did for me, what would I be losing? My needs weren’t being met as things were, so it couldn’t get much worse, right?

I worked up the nerve to talk to Pace about it. We agreed that text messages on our phones were a great way to communicate that she was thinking of me. However, I was sure that it would feel artificial, since I’d specifically asked for it.

The first time she texted me, all she said was “I love you!” but it *totally made my day!* I felt loved, special, and considered. I saved the message and