

# How to Request a Behavior Change

Many of us are so afraid of damaging our relationships with others that we keep quiet when their behavior offends us. This strategy works in the short term, but eventually we become so resentful that our true feelings burst out – often unedited. Consider this feedback directed to an executive from his teammate. The executive had to present the teammate’s portion of a presentation to the board when the teammate didn’t show up for a board meeting:

*I cant believe you didn't show up last night. You've got to stop putting your own interests above the team's. I'm tired of having to cover for you. If you want to be a member of this team, step up and do your part. If not, do us a favor and resign from the team.*

Obviously, this is not the best approach to getting someone to change his or her behavior. More than likely, the other person will become offended and defensive. In certain circumstances, the behavior might even become worse. And, the relationship between the two teammates will be strained.

What’s needed is a way to deliver feedback that is candid yet non-threatening. Here’s a four-step model to show you how.



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## SBIR Model

SBIR Model	The Step Described	The Step Illustrated
<b>Step 1: Situation</b>	Describe a specific situation.	“When we presented our findings to the Board yesterday...”
<b>Step 2: Behavior</b>	Describe – without judgment – the observable behavior that bothered you.	“...and you didn’t attend the meeting...”
<b>Step 3: Impact</b>	Describe the impact the behavior had on you.	“...I had to present your slides. I don’t know the material like you do, and it showed. I was embarrassed. I thought our team looked unprepared and that it reflected badly on us.”
<b>Step 4: Request</b>	Describe what you’d like the person to do instead in the future and ask if they would be willing to make this change.	“In the future, if you’re not able to come to a presentation, I’d ask you to send someone in your place who can speak to your portion of the presentation. Would you be willing to do that?”

## **SBIR works because**

- It describes an observable behavior (“you didn’t attend the meeting”) rather than making a character judgment (“you put your own interests above the team’s”).
- It explains the impact the other person’s behavior is having on you. Don’t assume that the other person is aware of this impact. Take the time to explain it.
- It specifies the particular behavior change you’re asking the other person to make. You’re more likely to get the behavior change you’re after if you explicitly request it.



Of course, using SBIR doesn’t guarantee that the other person will change his/her behavior; nothing you can say will do that. It does, however, make it easier for the other person to hear and consider your feedback rather than reacting defensively against it.