RAFT

Resilience for Advocates through Foundational Training®

How To Ask for Help

RAFT VIRTUAL TRAINING WORKBOOK

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ABOUT RAFT

RAFT supports organizations and advocates to cultivate human-centered workspaces through foundational wellness practices, resources, and training to build resilience and promote a healthier gender-based violence advocacy ecosystem.

VIRTUAL TRAINING OBJECTIVES

In this workshop, we will consider how our lived experiences impact our concept of needing support and asking for help. We will spend intentional time and effort in preparation to make an effective ask. You'll learn how to make a clear request to the right person so you can advocate for yourself to get the support you need.

You will have the opportunity to:
★ Reflect on how you think about asking for help
★ Identify barriers to asking for help
★ Learn the scientific benefits of asking for, receiving and giving help
★ Learn to make a SMART request
★ Practice asking for help

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Resilience and Asking for Help

Asking for help is part of "being resilient." Resilience is a process of adapting well to life's challenges. To actively build personal resilience, we focus on what we can control, like making decisions and taking actions that support our wellbeing. When we need help, asking is an important skill that empowers us to get the support we need to adapt to challenges.

When we being to understand and work intentionally on building personal resilience, there is a common realization of being overwhelmed by our responsibilities and the need for support to navigate our lives.

A More Accurate Perspective When Asking for Help

Self Reflect

Check in with how you feel emotionally and physically when you think about asking for help. Self-reflection prompts:

★ Think of a time recently that you needed help. Whether or not your asked for help at that time, reflect on the feelings and thoughts that came up when you considered asking for help.
★ Think of a time when you wanted to ask for help, but didn't. What made you hesitate? What feelings or thoughts came up for you?
★ In what context is it easy to ask for help? In what context do you struggle to ask for help? Consider the context and answer questions like where/when/who/why/what?

Examples:
★ If I do ask someone, will they support me in the way I need? Will they tell me what to do or help me figure out what I want to do?
★ My friends/family lack knowledge of the challenge I'm facing or available resources.
  ☆ Men don't talk about mental health* so there is not much information about relevant being shared among friend-groups or passed down from parents/dads.
★ I don't want to look stupid, so I'll just google it instead of asking.
  ☆ Specifically in entry-level positions or as the newest/youngest person on the team (interns, volunteers)
★ It feels like I'm bad at asking for help. I don't do it when I know I should. I'm working on asking for help with parenting and gathering my community to help me as a parent. If I ask for help, I'm not a capable mother.

*This anecdotal example is supported by research that shows men access formal mental health resources at a lower rate than women. SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey, 2019–2021.

Barriers to Asking for Help

Individual Barriers to Asking for Help

If asking for help is hard for you, take some time to consider the following:
★ While you were growing up, what kind of messages did you get about asking for and receiving help?
★ Did your family/school/community place more value on "doing it yourself" or "letting others in"?
★ When you attempted to reach out for support in childhood, how did the people around you respond?
★ Did the people available to support us know the answer to our questions, know how to help or have access to the resources to help?

Examples:
★ Negative response to asking for help
★ Not receiving help at all after asking
★ Receiving some support, but not the help you needed

Systemic Barriers to Asking for Help

Help is not as easy to obtain as we think sometimes. There are practical, systemic barriers that prevent us from accessing the support we need:
★ Stigma (I will be perceived as needy, incompetent, or burdensome. 'we should not need help,' 'it is shameful to ask for help,' 'people who need help are burdens')
  ☆ Tied to shame categories (Ex: category-age, want to avoid assumptions about age: younger people don't have valuable experience, older people need help to use tech, may be uncomfortable to ask for help from a younger person)
★ Cultural complexities ('the type of help I need is not available')
★ Lack of access to relevant resources. (Health, education, financial, etc.)
★ Not knowing who to ask/what to ask/what resources are available.

Additional Psychological Barriers to Asking for Help

★ Fear of rejection
★ Fear of disconnection
★ Inability to reciprocate
★ Trying to manage emotions of others
★ Feeling like a burden/weak/lazy/failure
★ Seeing self as a giver
★ Prioritizing others' needs over self-care
★ Perfectionism

Effects of Going it Alone

What happens when we need to ask for help, but we don't?
★ Self-isolation, loss of connection in relationships
★ Hyper-independence – a trauma response that tells us based on past traumatic experiences that we can't rely on others for support.
★ We react to what we experience and then learn from that and adapt our approach. Ex: After asking for help and hearing "no" so many times, we give up, feel defeated, disappointed, let down, stuck, etc.

Why We Help

We are "Helpers"

Heidi Grant, author of Reinforcements: How to Get People to Help You (Harvard Business Review). "People underestimate the odds that others will help us."
Based on RAFT's Roadmap to Advocate Wellness survey results, advocates like you love to help. In your own words:

"If someone asks me for help, I'm all in."
"I am assertive, knowledgeable, and organized.
I am also always willing to help my colleagues."
"That I am genuinely compassionate and want to help as much as I can."
"I value how I respond to those who seek my help. Meaning I don't expect anything from them, but I do require me to listen, not make judgments, to be culturally aware and engaged, and to be sensitive to the needs of our clientele and myself. If I'm having a bad day, as we sometimes do, I STAY HOME!!!" [Boundaries]
When asked 'What do you value most about your colleagues?" advocates said,
"How we are able to support and help each other."
"They are very supportive and help to fill in gaps where I am unsure."
"They're so kind and resourceful and helpful, I never feel like I'm alone in what I do."
"The way they support each other. If someone is having a hard time, someone is always willing to help."

Take a moment to reflect on why you choose to help others. Recognize that more often that not, people want to say yes to a request for help. Reflecting on your positive experiences of helping others can get you into the right mindset to dispel your fears of disconnection, and give you the motivation to ask.

In your journal, jot down a positive experience of helping someone. What made the experience positive for you? (work and/or personal)

Benefits of Helping

Scientifically Proven Benefits of Helping Others

★ Point of Connection
★ Emotionally Rewarding
★ Improved Physical Health
★ Gives a Sense of Purpose & Satisfaction
★ Increases Self-Accountability [Fail. Learn. Grow. opportunity with follow-through]

Addtional Benefits of Helping Others

★ Honored that someone trusts me. Building connections in a relationship
★ Excited to use my strengths
★ Accomplished upon completing request
★ Fulfilled in my values [of support, service, love, connection, trustworthiness, expertise, kindness, reliability, knowledge, making a difference, helpfulness, etc.]

Benefits of Asking for Help

Scientifically Proven Benefits of Asking for Help

★ Boosts happiness & lowers anxiety by improving connections with others
★ Asking for help means sharing our challenges which helps to reduce stress around an issue
★ Receiving help can lead to feelings of gratitude
★ Practicing vulnerability improves relationships
★ Getting support is part of self-care
★ Healthy relationships support our physical health

The Art of Asking

Making a Request Example

Requester: Can I ask you a favor? I know you're about to clock out, but...
Helper: Uh… what is it?
Requester: Will you help with this grant report? Pretty please?
Helper: Now?
Requester: Yes, it's due this week. I'll buy you dinner!

Breaking Down the Request

Below answer the following questions:
What issues stand out to you in this request?
What could be improved in this request for help?

Asking for Help is a Strengths-based Skill
- Amanda Palmer

Tips for Asking

How to Ask

★ Be direct.
  ☆ Avoid should language or hints (According to a 2010 study on the benefits of helping others, personal volition is critical.)
  ☆ Avoid hidden requests, being overly polite, apologizing, putting yourself down.
  ☆ No need to offer additional motivation or reward
  ☆ Don't avoid asking and just let things fall apart.
★ Remain open-minded to a "No, but..." offer of support
★ You don't need to ask for a favor at work. Teamwork and working together are part of our work responsibilities in a collaborative work setting. Helping our coworkers is not a favor, it's what we do.
★ Find someone you trust and practice making a SMART Request.

When to Ask

★ When you are prepared
  ☆ Plan ahead: write a list of tasks to help articulate what you need help with, prioritize your needs and establish support for essential needs first.
  ☆ Practice relaxation techniques
★ With more time than you think is needed
  ☆ Your support needs may require multiple requests for help over time and from multiple people.
★ Face-to-face can make people feel more comfortable and provide a more formal setting (Heidi Grant, pg. 25)
  ☆ Consider best format: in-person, video, email, instant message

Who to Ask

★ Start with someone from your trusted network.
★ Someone who has the skills/tools/resources needed
  ☆ Research the resources and professional help around you.
★ Someone who has the information/power/expertise needed

Making a SMART Request

**Adapted from SMART Goals
(Doran, George T., November 1981. Management Review.)**

S
Be Specific.
Assess the situation you need help with and break it down into specific requests.
Example: Vague request – Can you help me apply for jobs? ->
Specific request: Will you please review my cover letter for the Workshop Facilitator position at RAFT and give feedback?

M
Make it Measurable.
How does your supporter know they've helped enough?
Example: It's a one page cover letter and I need it back by next Thursday.

A
Must be Achievable.
Ask someone with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to accomplish the tasks.
Example: I know you have experience copy editing and I could use that type of support.

R
Be Realistic/Reasonable.
Your request should be respectful of individual capacity.
Example: Please consider formatting and grammar in your feedback.

T
Set a Timeline.
Your request should be timebound so set a due date and/or check-in/follow-up dates to ensure follow-through.
Example: My application is due in two weeks and I'd like to get your feedback by next Thursday so I can make edits.

Why Take the Time to Develop a SMART Request?

★ Helps the task feel more manageable for you and the person being asked. Knowing specifics makes it easier for them to determine if they have the capacity to help.
★ Manages expectations and avoids miscommunication. The more specific your request is, the clearer the expectation for fulfilling it.
★ Prioritize your needs and establish support for essential needs first.
★ Helps you figure out if there are multiple people who can help instead of relying on one person or just yourself. (Note: This is key for people in leadership positions. Be transparent with your team about the big picture and what it takes to get there so they know where to support.)

Practice Asking for Help

About this Tool

- This sheet combines two of the tools RAFT teaches in our workshops to help with communication.
- There may be situations where you might fill this sheet out and share it with other people, and other times where you will just reference the sheet without filling it out.
- If you are a leader, or in any situation where you have potential power over someone you are making a request too, use this sheet to help to give that person time to respond, and reduce some of the pressure from the difference in power
- We recommend that you share this tool with your team one-one, or during a staff meeting.

Make a SMART Request

S

Be Specific

Assess the situation you need help with and break it down into specific requests.
- Who are you asking for help? Are you sure this is the best person to help you?
- What do you need help with? Be as specific as possible in this request.
- How do you want to receive this help? What don't you want from them when they help you?

Example:

Vague request – can you help me apply for jobs?

Specific request – Will you please review my cover letter for the workshop facilitator position at RAFT and give feedback?

M

Make it Measurable

How does your supporter know they've helped enough?
- How will the person you are asking for help know when they are done?
- How will you know when the person is done?
- If there is something that can be measured to show completion, what is it?

Example: It's a one-page cover letter and I need it back by next Thursday.

A
**Must be
Achievable**

Ask someone with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to accomplish the task.
- Why is this person the best choice to help you?
- What resources are needed for this request?
- What skills do they have that are needed for this request?

Example: I know you have experience copy editing and I could use that type of support.

R
**Be Realistic/
Reasonable**

Your request should be respectful of individual capacity.
- When setting a timeline for this help pick a timeline that is reasonable for the person considering everything else they are doing.
- Be realistic for when you need this request completed by. Don't adjust your timeline in the hopes they say "yes".

Example: Please consider formatting and grammar in your feedback.

T
**Set a
Timeline**

Your request should be timebound so set a due date and/or check-in/follow-up dates to ensure follow through.
- Look at your timeline and make sure that your request for help will be completed in time for you to meet any of your deadlines.
- What is the deadline you have for this request to be completed? Is it a specific time and date, or is there a range?

Example: My application is due in two weeks and I'd like to get your feedback by next Thursday so I can make edits.

Saying "No." in a Positive Way

What is a positive "No."

A positive "No" starts with what you're for instead of what you're against. Focus on what you want, your core interest, and what really matters to you. This way you are not in opposition to someone else's demand or behavior. Instead, you can rely on the personal core values you've established today.

Yes!
Yes to your core values.

No.
No, I cannot.

Yes?
Is there another solution?

Yes!

Always begin with a "yes" first. Your first yes is saying yes to one of your core values.

This first "Yes" is the basis for your "No." Uncovering your "yes" first will ground you in something positive, give you a sense of direction, and give you energy.

No.

Deliver a clear "no" to the request the other person has made.

Yes?

After you have said "no," create an invitation for a positive outcome. Tell the other person not just what you don't want but what you do want. So, as you close one door, you may be able to open another. This second "Yes?" must be something you are comfortable and willing to do, it is not a compromise or an accommodation that will stress or upset you. In some situations, there may not be a second "Yes?" to offer.

Note: It is ok to take your time delivering a positive "No."In some situations, you may not be ready or able to deliver your "Yes! No. Yes?" immediately. You may need time to think. Take a few breaths while you think, or, if needed, ask to give the person an answer later so you can take time to think through your "Yes! No. Yes?"

SMART Request template

What support, information, and/or resources do you need to complete your task?

_____

_____

Who's help/expertise/support could you use? Whose involvement or approval is required to complete your task? (Check your organizations' SOPs, team profiles, etc.)

_____

_____

Jot down details about your support need using the SMART Request template.
Specific (what tasks do you need help with? what type of support do you want?, best communication methods):

_____

_____

Measurable (scope of the task, what does completion of the task look like?):

_____

_____

Achievable (aligns with personal/organizational mission/goals/values):

_____

_____

Realistic (doable within the timeline and current capacity, with available resources):

_____

_____

Timeline (due dates, schedule follow-up discussion):

_____

_____

Using full sentences, write out your SMART Request:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Email template

Email Structure	Example Text
To: (select personal and/or professional email address, consider who should be included, preferred communication boundaries)	Info@raftcares.org, outreach@raftcares.org Advocate Email List Recent Contacts Email List
Subject: (brief intro to email. Incl: title of project, reminder, upcoming date)	New Workshop! How to Ask for Help Paid Opportunity: Participate in RAFT's newest Workshop
Greeting (brief greeting in language relevant to your as sender and your recipients)	Hello! Hola! Dear _____,
Friendly Check-in ([optional] callback to previous meeting/discussion topic, question expressing interest in recipients' work/personal life)	It was great meeting you at last year's NCADV conference. How is your (ongoing project/growth endeavor) going?
Main Details (succinct introduction including when, what, where, who)	I'm Nicole Crespi, the Lead Workshop Facilitator for RAFT: Resilience for Advocates through Foundational Training. We're hosting a new virtual resilience-building workshop called How to Ask for Help on Friday, June 21, 2024 from 12pm to 2pm (CST).
Make SMART Request (direct, clear sentence requesting support that includes the specific support need, a measurable task that is achievable and realistic for that individual's knowledge, experience and capacity, and a due date or timeline for follow up.	We are looking for advocates to join us for 2 hours to participate in this new workshop. You will be compensated for your time, and we hope you can provide feedback afterwards via a survey. Please respond to the invite by June 12th at the latest.
Contact Info for Questions (simple sentence offering preferred method of contact if recipients have questions)	Please email me with any questions that come up. If you have any questions about participating, please call (###) ###-####.
Thank You (offer general a general thank you or thank recipient for their time/attention/ support)	Thank you, Thank you for your continued support of RAFT! Thank you for the work you do!
Signature (Include your name and additional relevant details like your pronouns, credentials, position title, organization, phone/email/ socials, website/resources link, org. mission, required confidentiality notices, etc.)	Nicole Crespi (she/her/ella) Lead Workshop Facilitator RAFT: Resilience for Advocates through Foundational Training

Final Thoughts on Asking for Help

It feels scarier than it is because of the emotions tied to our past experiences of not receiving the support we needed. We now have the opportunity to practice and implement new tools to make more efficient asks that lead to successful collaboration.

Set Yourself Up for Success
★ Start small when practicing asking for help (your version of small/easy will be different from others)
★ Ask people in your trusted network first

Thank you for joining RAFT for this workshop.
Your participation and shared experiences are truly appreciated.

You can download all the workbooks and check out
RAFT's other resources at: https://www.raftcares.org/advocate-resources-2/

We encourage you to stay in touch and keep the conversation going:
Sign up for our newsletter and follow our social media at:
https://linktr.ee/raftcaresorg

Join the RAFT community for our support calls:
Advocate Support Call – 1st Wednesday & 4th Friday of every month.
Hot Topics Support Call -- 1st Friday of every month.
Survivor-Advocate Support Calls -- 3rd Wednesday of each month
Leadership Support Calls – 2nd Tuesday & 4th Wednesday of each month
Sign up to join and be reminded of support calls at:
https://www.raftcares.org/support-calls-2/

Interested in our Leadership resources?
Sign up here:
https://www.raftcares.org/subscribe-leaders/

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or scan the QR code to the right