

The DESC Model

When we have a negative message to communicate, we are often afraid of being "rough-edged" with the risk of annoying our interlocutor or being "too nice" and not being heard in our request.

To facilitate the communication of negative messages, the DESC method is a tool in 4 steps allowing to express disagreement or criticism, with benevolence and assertiveness.

The acronym DESC guides us in the process:

D = Describe the facts

E = Express my Emotions

S = Specify Solutions

C = Positive consequences of the solution and Conclusion

➤ Step 1: Describe the facts

This means presenting the situation with concrete and observable facts. The description must remain simple, without exaggerations, and above all be objective.

You must therefore make the difference between a judgment (subjective) and a fact (objective). Often we tend to make a judgment when we actually want to describe a fact. There is a very simple technique to identify the concrete fact that led us to this judgment. Ask yourself: "What makes me say that? "

Example:

- **Judgment:** "Angeline is clumsy"
- ⇒ What makes me say that?
- **Fact:** "Angeline dropped a pile of files"

➤ Step 2: Express our emotions

In this situation how do I feel?

For example: joy, sadness, fear, and anger are our four primary emotions; secondary emotions: surprise, disgust, ... (see the wheel of emotions of Robert Plutchik: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Plutchik#/media/File:Plutchik-wheel.svg)

The emotion or the feeling will focus on the behavior of the person, and not towards the person himself.

Example:

- "you tire me" will be replaced by "I am tired of calling you and you are not answering the phone".

⇒ **Use "I" and not "you" or "they"**

Whenever you use "I", you take responsibility for your words and your emotions: "I am annoyed when you do not answer the phone."

On the contrary, "You" is accusing. Your interlocutor will feel aggrieved: "You annoy me when you do not answer the phone."

➤ Step 3: Specify solutions

Specify the behaviors you expect from the person to solve the problem.

Example:

- I expect you to..., I suggest you..., I would prefer that you...

⇒ **Solutions must be clear, realistic and achievable.**

➤ Step 4: Positive consequences of the solution and conclusion

Highlight the benefits of this solution for both parties, the concept of "win-win", key to concept of HR.

Example: this will allow us to ...

For DESC to be effective:

- **Prepare your DESC,**
- **Respect the order of the steps,**
- **Find the right moment (close to the action) and the right place (in private),**
- **Deal with one problem at a time**