

Understanding SEAL

At some point, everyone has conflicts and misunderstandings with others. Trying to articulate your anger when you're scared or intimidated just makes the situation that much harder.

SEAL is our strategy for communicating when you're angry or are facing another difficult situation. It's a structure to put your own words in. It's not a guarantee that the other person will change their behavior, but it can make you feel better by giving you some power in the situation, can improve your chance of being taken seriously, and can keep the situation from getting out of control.

Explain that SEAL is an acronym for the steps in the strategy. Write the steps on the chalkboard or flip chart, then discuss what each step means.

Stop

Breathe, observe, and ask yourself what the situation is about. Decide when and where you can talk to the person so the person will be most likely to listen to you.

Explain

Take your bad feelings and put them into words—be specific about what you don't like and what you want instead. Think about what you are feeling and what you want first so that you can then tell the other person.

Affirm and acknowledge

Affirm your right (and the other person's right) to interact with people without being ridiculed, dismissed, or harmed. If appropriate, acknowledge your part in contributing to the situation.

Lock

Lock in the friendship: Decide to resolve the situation and continue being friends.

Lock out the friendship: Decide that you can't be friends and want no further contact with the person.

Take a vacation: Decide to take a break from the friendship but agree to talk later about reestablishing the friendship.



SEAL Steps

Using this form can help you follow the SEAL steps to solve problems or deal positively with conflicts.

Stop

Who is the conflict with and what is it about? When and where will you talk to the person?

Explain

How are you feeling, and what do you want to happen?

Affirm and acknowledge

What rights do you and the other person have in the situation? Do you have a role in the conflict?

Lock

What do you want your relationship to be? Do you want to lock in the friendship, lock it out, or take a vacation? (You may need to decide this after you speak to the person.)