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Before You Reach Out: What Do You Need Right Now?

Sometimes conflict isn't about a lack of support — it's about a mismatch in support.

START HERE

You may reach out because you're overwhelmed and want someone to listen. They care about you, so they start offering solutions. Instead of feeling supported, you may feel frustrated or unheard. They may be trying to help — you may simply need a different kind of help.

1 PAUSE — What am I feeling?

What happened? _____
What am I feeling? _____
What seems to be underneath that feeling? _____

2 ASK — What do I need from this person?

☐ LISTEN — I need to vent and feel heard.
"I really just need someone to listen right now."

☐ HELP ME THINK — I want another perspective or help deciding.
"Can I talk this through with you? I'd like to hear what you think."

☐ HELP ME DO — I need practical support.
"I'm overwhelmed. Would you be willing to help me with _____?"

☐ COMFORT ME — I need empathy, reassurance, or connection.
"I don't need to fix this right now. I could really use some comfort."

☐ Something else: _____

3 SAY IT — Name the support you need

Don't make them guess. Be clear about the kind of support you're asking for.

"Can I talk to you about something? What I need most right now is _____."

4 IF THEY FORGET — Gently redirect

If you asked them to listen and they begin giving advice, gently redirect if you can.

"I know you're trying to help. Can you just stay with me and listen a little longer? I'm not ready for advice yet."

5 GIVE THE PROCESS SOME GRACE

You are learning to name your needs instead of expecting someone to know them. They are learning how you want to be supported. This may be new for both of you. Neither person has to get it right immediately. Clear communication, gentle reminders, and practice help create a new pattern.

A helpful question for either person:

"Do you want me to listen, help you think it through, comfort you, or help you do something?"

Clear communication does not guarantee a perfect response. It gives the other person information they may not otherwise have — and gives both of you a better chance of connecting well.