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Here's an example. One of your kids says, "We never do what I want." That might be hard to hear if you focus on the words he uses and if you think 90 percent of your life is focused on meeting his needs. Take a deep breath and listen for what they are; I'm guessing respect, and a say in decision making. You don't have to agree with him, by the way. All you're doing is trying to understand his view of things. You could respond with, "Are you frustrated and want more say in the family's decision-making process?" That's it! Now, carry the conversation through by listening for his feelings and needs and expressing your own. The whole conversation might sound like this, "Yeah, you and Dad always get your own way." "So, you think we're only doing what we want without considering what you want?" "Yeah." "I feel sad about this because I know I spend a lot of time considering your needs, and then often neglecting my own. I guess we both want the same thing, balance and respect. You and I would both like to know that the other one values our needs too. Do you agree with that?" "Yeah, I guess." "Would you be willing to talk about what we are both hoping for tonight, and maybe brainstorm ways we can both get what we want?" "OK."

If we focus on the words, we often miss the point. Listen deeply to the needs the other person is trying to convey. Once you understand each other, you will be ready to resolve the situation.

Empathize with at least one person today.