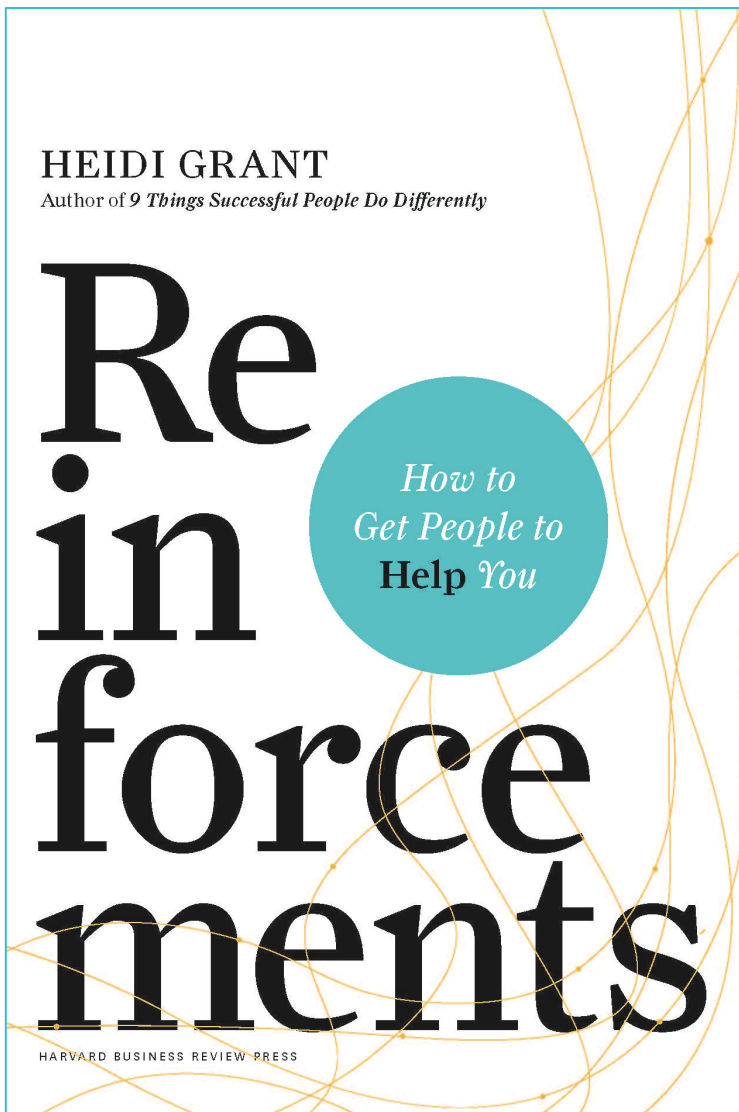


# The Reinforcements Workbook

By Dr. Heidi Grant



## Features

- Important Do's and Don'ts when asking for help
- Say This, Not That
- The Help-Seeker's Planner

**It helps to  
remember...**

We underestimate the likelihood that others will help us by

**48%**

## Do's of Asking

- Be explicit about exactly what you need. Give details.
- Explain why you need the help, so they know your need is legitimate.
- Let the potential helper know why they, specifically, are the person best able to help you.
- Describe how the help they will give will have impact, so they can visualize its effectiveness.
- Ask for help from someone who has turned you down in the past.
- Follow up with the help giver, if possible, to let them know how it all turned out.



## Don'ts of Asking

- Don't assume that other people know that you need or want help. People aren't mind-readers.
- Don't offer a reward for helping when you have an existing relationship with the help-giver.
- Don't over-apologize for asking – it makes it awkward for everyone.
- Don't ask for help over email when an in-person request is possible.
- Don't make a request for help to multiple potential helpers at the same time. It leads to diffusion of responsibility.
- Don't be rigid if someone offers to help you in a different way than you asked. Have an open mind.

## It helps to remember...

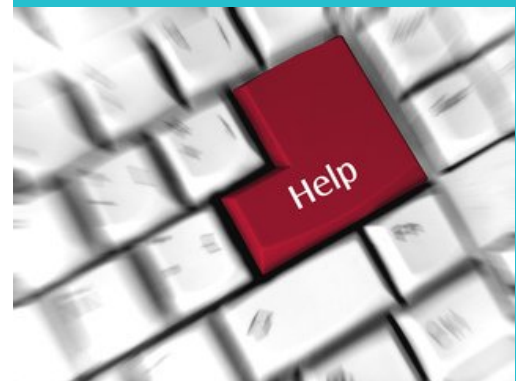
When it's time to express gratitude for the help you were given, it's important to focus on the *giver*, not on yourself.

Too often, we express thanks by placing all the emphasis on our own experience...

*It let me relax.  
It gave me bragging rights at work.  
It made me so happy.*

And while it's natural to want to share how someone's help made you feel, research shows that gratitude that is *other-praising* is experienced as more rewarding to the giver. For example:

*It shows how responsible you are...  
You always go out of your way...  
You are so good at that...*





*“Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping...”*

*– Fred Rogers*

## It helps to remember...

Receiving help often leaves us with mixed feelings. And so we assume that asking for help will make us seem less likable or competent.

But research shows that helpers like people they have helped *more* after helping them, not less.

## Say This... Not That

### Say...

“I’m really interested in your company and I’m hoping you might have fifteen minutes to answer some questions I have before I apply. I’d be happy to send you those in advance.”

### Not...

“I’d love to chat.”

“Can I take you for coffee and pick your brain?”

### Say...

“It would be incredibly generous of you to do this for me. I know it’s asking a lot, but it will make a huge difference and really help me land this client.”

### Not...

“I’m so, so sorry to have to ask you for this. It’s really embarrassing. You probably think it’s ridiculous that I can’t do this myself, and I agree.”

### Say...

“I have been trying all week to finish the ABC report and with my deadlines on the X and Y projects, I just can’t get to it. I know you are busy, but would you possibly be able to take this on?”

### Not...

“Would you finish the ABC report?”

### Say...

“I so appreciate everything you’ve done to support me and the others on our team, and I hope you don’t mind me asking for your help again.”

### Not...

“If you help me with this, then I will take you to lunch next week. I know you love that sushi place...”

# The Help-Seeker's Planner

Use these pages to plan your request for help with maximum effectiveness. You can also use these questions to guide conversation in a *Reinforcement-seeker* discussion group.

What do you need help with? \_\_\_\_\_

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What **specific task** could someone do for you that would help you with this?

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What person(s) is most capable of doing this for you?

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What concerns are you feeling about asking this person for help?

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# The Help-Seeker's Planner (continued)

Given what you know about helping, how serious are those concerns? If you ask for their help, what's the worst that can happen?

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How will you ask them? If not in person, how will you make it *feel* personal?

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How can you provide reinforcements?

**Positive identity:**

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**In-group identity:**

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**Effectiveness:**

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