

The Couples' Dialogue Process (*Intentional Dialogue*)

(See *And They Were Not Ashamed*, pg. 199; See also *Getting the Love You Want: A Couples Workshop Manual*)

The following are some reasons why you might want to have a *Couples' Dialogue* (Active Listening). The process itself can be very therapeutic.

1. You want to discuss a topic that you think might be "touchy."
2. You want to be listened to, fully heard, and understood.
3. You are upset about something and want to discuss it, or you are having strong positive emotions and want to feel heard.

SENDER	RECEIVER
1. The one who wants to send a message must take the initiative and says, "I would like to discuss something. Is now a good time?"	1. It is the Receiver's job to grant a Couples' Dialogue ASAP... <u>now</u> if possible. "I'm available now." (If not now, set an appointment time so that the sender knows when s/he will be heard.)
2. Begin to send message about a topic you wish to discuss. (Use "I..." statements.)	2. MIRROR: "So, what I hear you saying is ..." (paraphrase the sender's message) Accuracy Check: "Did I get it? Did I hear you accurately?" Encouragement: "Is there more about that?"
3. Continue sending (or re-sending) message until Receiver gets it all (and correctly) on a particular issue. Keep it simple.	3. When the Sender has finished sending and the Receiver has mirrored it all accurately, the Receiver <u>summarizes</u> all of the Sender's message with this lead-in: "Let me see if I got <u>all</u> of that..." (Check for accuracy.) The Receiver DOES NOT share what he/she thinks about what was said, but just reflects/mirrors back what was said.
4. Listen to summary to see if the Receiver heard you correctly and give confirmation of accuracy.	4. VALIDATE: Receiver states the logic of the Sender's point of view by saying, "You make sense, because..." or "I can understand that..." until the Sender feels validated. (To validate means you are able to say that from their perspective you can see where they are coming from.) If you cannot validate say, "Help me understand that better" until you can validate their point of view.
5. Listen to validation. Acknowledge when you feel heard/validated (even if the Receiver doesn't necessarily agree).	5. EMPATHIZE: Receiver now tries to imagine how it might feel to be the Sender. A lead-in sentence might be: "I can imagine you might be feeling..." or "I imagine you might have felt..." or "I can see you are feeling..." (if feelings are obvious). Feelings are stated in <u>one</u> word (e.g.: angry, confused, sad, upset, etc. -- see below for more "feeling words"). If your statement entails more than one word it is probably a thought. ("You feel that you don't want to go with me"-- this is a thought, not a feeling). "You Feel sad"--this is a feeling.) Also, one never knows for sure what another person is feeling, so check if you got the feelings correct by saying: "Is that what you are feeling?" or "Did I get that right?"
6. Listen. If Receiver did not get the correct feelings, or all of the feelings, share them again.	6. If the Sender shares with you other feelings, mirror back what is said: "So, you also feel ..." (paraphrase the sender's message).
7. Once all three parts are completed (MIRRORING, VALIDATING, and EMPATHIZING) and you feel fully heard, switch roles. You, the Sender, now become the Receiver on this issue to hear and "receive" the other's perspective on the issue that was just raised.	7. When the Sender acknowledges completion, Receiver becomes the Sender to respond <i>on this issue</i> : "I would like to respond now." This allows for an interactive process, not a long airing session for one person.

FEELING WORDS

afraid	bored	disconnected	helpless	insecure	nervous	uneasy
alone	cheated	discouraged	hopeful	irritated	rejected	unimportant
angry	connected	embarrassed	hopeless	lonely	repulsed	unloved
annoyed	confused	fearful	humiliated	loved	sad	upset
anxious	depressed	frustrated	hurt	mad	stressed	
ashamed	disappointed	happy	inadequate	neglected	trapped	

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