

Safe communication

RELATIONSHIP SCRIPT

Safe communication is all about preventing each person's nervous system from moving into a hyper or hypo state - aggressive or shut down. Conversations about conflicts or sensitive topics will often put us in an elevated or withdrawn state. We can learn to recognize this in ourselves and in our loved ones.

When we feel unsafe, we may say things that we don't mean and further damage relationships or lose our ability to have self-compassion. We may have a skewed perspective, and bring the past into current situations.

Watch out for words like "always" or "never". These words are clues that past wounds are at play. These feelings are not to be dismissed but require some introspection and some honesty or discovery about past relationships.

It helps to use a notepad during difficult conversations. The receiver records the data of your conversation. Their focus should be about getting the information accurate, as stated, rather than trying to understand or correct the sender. When roles change the recorder changes. This has two positive outcomes.

1 - The receiver, the one who is listening can focus on taking notes. This uses their brain in a different way that helps to prevent their nervous system from activating.

2- The sender, the one initiating the conversation, can make sure all their thoughts and feelings are heard, knowing they are validated on paper. This helps them remain calm.

FEELING
PROMPTS

Use statements like "I felt", "I feel", "I am" and "I was feeling" avoid statements beginning with you, "you made me", "you are".

sad	overwhelmed	ashamed	criticized	isolated	insecure
hurt	frustrated	unheard	guilty	surprised	neglected
trapped	enraged	abandoned	embarrassed	shocked	controlled
betrayed	attacked	pressured	unloved	nervous	discounted
angry	judged	scared	alone	terrified	confused
rejected	lonely	humiliated	helpless	miserable	invisible
speechless	cheated	irritated	depressed	annoyed	annoyed
manipulated	attacked	anxious	hopeless	anguish	defeated

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START

Ask when would be a better time and make a plan to meet then.

YES

- ◀.....

try once again or continue.

YES

NO/MORE

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RECEIVER **START**

Take careful notes. At a good breaking point repeat back to the sender as close to word for word as possible beginning with the statement, "what I am hearing you say is..." then ending with, "**did I get that right?**" or similar.

←..... NO

Continue taking notes as they send information to you. You may stop and ask them to repeat or to get clarification. When the talking slows or stops repeat back the new information in the same way as previously done ending with, "**did I get that right?**"

..... YES

YES

NO

Ask, "Is there anything more?"

NO

YES

Notice any changes in demeanor or feelings of safety – deep breaths or calm speech. Has their language softened? You may empathize with words like "I imagine that you must feel..." or say "I am sorry you were feeling..." Own the parts of the difficulties that are yours and know that showing compassion for their feelings is not the same as being responsible for them. You will get a chance to tell your side of things soon. Your compassion is not wasted here. Thank your partner for sharing.

Check in with yourself. If you are feeling overwhelmed or not able to focus, tell your partner that what they have to say is really important and you need some time to recharge. Thank them for being open and honest. Make a plan to meet again or if you desire you can shift roles now.