5. THE DIALOGUE PROCESS

Adapted from “[Making Marriage Simple](http://makingmarriagesimple.com/)” by Harville Hendrix & Helen laKelly Hunt

**Truth #5: It’s Not WHAT You Say; It’s HOW You Say It**

Dialogue is a structured way of talking that builds empathic connection between you and your partner. It’s a way to engage in a new way of relating. The more you practice Dialogue, the more natural it will feel. Feel free to use it when frustrations (negatives) or something to celebrate (positives) about your relationship surfaces. Research has shown it takes five positives to balance out every one negative interaction.

**Don’t complain! Make a behaviour change request!** When youare the Speaker, they are the Listener. These are two different roles.Tell your partner you’d like to be the Speaker to say how you feel and what you want about one issue.

**A** – Before starting to speak, remember a time when things were good between you. The person you are speaking to is not the enemy. The reason you are speaking is to make things better.

**B** - Contract with your partner to do the process. Don’t just dump. Ask “Is this a good time?” If not, arrange an appointment when you will both be free for 10 minutes without distractions.

**C -** Use the four steps below:

**STEP 1: State what you saw/heard about one particular event**

“This morning when you left the dishes in the sink…”

**STEP 2: Explain what you have made up about it/your thoughts about it**

“The meaning I give to it is that you feel entitled to be irresponsible and that you’d like me to pick up after you like your mother did”. Stick to one topic/event. Don’t bring in past behaviours. Don’t say “always” or “never”.

**STEP 3: Say how you feel about it**

“I make myself feel hurt and angry. Hurt that you don’t listen to me and angry that you don’t pull your weight.”

Feelings are **one word**, and may include: mad, sad, glad, scared, joy, pain, anger, fear, love, shame, guilt, lonely, helpless, lust etc.

**STEP 4: Ask for what you’d like**

Ask for something specific they could say or do to make you feel better/that would make it right, either now

or in the future. This is a Behaviour Change Request (BCR).

“What would help me feel better is for you to apologise, reassure me that you take this seriously and tell me that you’ll wash up when you say you will.”

**D - a)** Appreciate what you get **b)** let go of what you don’t get.

Now you can switch. The Speaker becomes the Listener and the Listener becomes the Speaker. The key to Dialogue is practice, practice, practice! It helps train the brain! Every interaction is an opportunity to bring Dialogue into your lives. Have fun with it!

**Further information** on [Speaking](http://vivianbaruch.com/free-stuff-3/toolkit/terry-real-information/6-shift-from-complaint-to-request-how-to-speak-2/) , [Listening](http://vivianbaruch.com/free-stuff-3/toolkit/terry-real-information/7-respond-with-generosity-how-to-listen-respond/), [Apologising](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MA2Xt7GfCp4) and [Taking a Responsible Time-out](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skWXZmd5VX4).

**Remember: In Dialogue, agreement is not the goal. The goal is to take turns and really listen to each other.**