

Improving as an Effective Initiator

1. Tell your partner what the topic for discussion is. Then describe:

- How big of a deal is this topic for you? (*Rate it on a scale of 1-10.*)
- Why it is important to you.

2. Think how you aspire to be when discussing this topic. Try to make it as emotionally safe as possible for your partner to hear you. For example, if you have one or more of the following qualities of being calm, open, honest, empathic, etc., you are less likely to trigger a “thumb” reaction in your partner.

3. Silently reflect on responses to the outline below before starting your dialogue. (*Your partner will be recapping and asking questions for clarity once your dialogue begins.*)

When this challenging situation occurs:

My ineffective attitudes or thoughts are (*name any variations of blaming or feeling “victim-y”*):

My negative emotions are (*fear, hurt, helpless, anxious, disgust, pain, sad, lonely, inadequate, etc.*):

What I do when I have these ineffective thoughts and feelings is (*This will be some kind of behavior you are not proud of*):

Even though these responses are ineffective, I do them anyway because:

Even though my responses are ineffective, I still hope you will respond to me in a better way by:

However, I do understand it may be difficult for you to respond to me in a better way because:

Something I might do to help you to respond to me in a more effective way is:

However, it's hard for me to help you to respond better to me because:

I apologize for treating you poorly, which makes it even harder for you to give me what I want (*It is even better if you can specify the negative thing you do/did that treated your partner poorly*):

What I want to add that hasn't been covered is: