

Initiator *Revealing one's self*

Focus On One Issue Only

Before you begin, get clear on your main concern.

Check your partner's readiness.

Stay on track with this one issue.

Describe what you want.

Express Your Feeling & Thoughts

Feelings are often complex and can even be contradictory.

Are you sad, scared, angry, or happy?

Go beyond simply expressing one feeling.

Look for the vulnerability that may be underneath your initial feeling, e.g. sadness, fear, jealousy, hurt, guilt, etc.

Remind Yourself

This is my problem. It's an expression of who I am. It's about me revealing myself and being willing to express my own thoughts and feelings.

Avoid Blaming, Accusing or Name-calling.

Blaming stops you from knowing yourself.

You have a role to play in being heard.

You may wish to acknowledge some positive aspects of the situation.

Be Open to Self-Discovery

Explore your personal, inner experience.

Keep going deeper into how you feel.

What does this tell you about yourself?

How do you respond?

How do you think and feel?

Remind Yourself

This process is about my willingness to take a risk to speak or discover my truth, and about increasing my ability to tolerate the expression of our differences.

Inquirer *The Effective Listener*

Listen Calmly

Don't defend yourself, argue or cross complain.
Remind yourself that you don't have to take what's said so personally.
Hold on to "The Big Picture."

Ask Questions

Develop an interested and curious state of mind.
The questions you ask are designed to understand your partner's experience.
Can you come up with any examples on your own that will let your partner know you really understand?

Remind Yourself

Am I in a place to listen with openness?
I do not own this problem.
I do not need to get upset.
It's up to me to manage my reactions.

Recap

Repeat back to your partner, as accurately and completely as you are able, what you've understood.
Check it out with your partner to see if it's complete and accurate.

Empathize

Do your best to put yourself in your partner's shoes.
Respond with empathy.
Keep making empathetic statements until a soothing moment occurs.
You can hold onto yourself and still imagine what it's like for the other person.

Remind Yourself

My partner is a separate person with their own feelings, thoughts, personality and family history. I only need to listen, not look for solutions.