

FULL RESPECT LIVING TOOLKIT – THE ESSENTIALS OF LIVING RELATIONALLY

Adapted from Terry Real <http://www.terryreal.com/store/full-respect-living-tool-kit>

7. RESPOND WITH GENEROSITY – HOW TO LISTEN & RESPOND

This skill is about being a **generous, responsive** and **mature listener**, which is a prerequisite to responding. Demonstrate your listening skills in two steps:

1. **Acknowledge all that you can** of what your partner has said. Help them feel better. Say “So this is your experience of it”. “Have I got the gist of it?”
2. **Give/acknowledge all that you can** of what your partner has asked for. **Take responsibility**, even if only for a small percentage of what they experienced. Help them feel understood. Say: “Yes, I did that”, or “Yes, I did some of that”, or “Yes, I certainly have done that in the past, so I can see why you’re concerned about it”.

YOUR PRACTICE

LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND

- Remember, the speaker role and the listener role are two different roles. **As the listener, listen.** Focus on your partner and not on your rebuttals, explanations or concerns, either spoken or in thought. **Get curious, instead of furious.**
- Give your partner more of what they are asking for by asking yourself “What will giving this really cost me?” Things that aren’t difficult to give, but mean a lot to your partner, will go a long way.

MEET IMMATURITY WITH MATURITY

On those occasions when your partner is obviously operating from an immoderate, childish part of themselves, **hunker down and stay moderate yourself.** Try two or three times to help your partner reseat themselves in their circle of health/functional adult self. Say something like “Honey, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to put you down. What I meant was...” If, after a few such efforts, it becomes clear that they are simply behind a wall or not listening, politely and respectfully disengage by taking a responsible time-out.

TAKE RESPONSIBLE TIME-OUTS

When either partner calls a time-out by saying the words “**time-out**”, by **using the T hand signal** or by using **any agreed-upon sign**, the interaction must come to an **immediate stop**. The spoken or gestured signal is understood by both partners to be an abbreviation of the following words: “Dear partner, for whatever reason, right or wrong, I am about to lose it. If I stay here and keep this up with you I am liable to say or do something stupid that I know I am going to regret. To avoid that, I’m taking a break to get a grip on myself and calm down. I will check back in with you responsibly in thirty minutes”. When reconnecting after a time-out, you must arrange a time within **twenty-four hours to have a repair conversation** about what triggered the initial fight. The person who took the time-out is responsible for putting forward a time when you can discuss this more calmly. This way issues are not avoided. If a particular issue always triggers a time out, seek expert help. You probably won’t figure it out on your own.