



Conflict & Communication

Communication can be hard, especially when you are dealing with conflict. Try these three exercises as a couple (or siblings, parents, etc.) to work on communication and conflict management together!

Communication Rules

First, create a few communication rules. These rules should be simple and realistic for both partners to follow. Try to make them positive and avoid using this as an opportunity to tell your partner what they do wrong. Try to become better communicators together!

Write your rules down & commit to them together. Consider displaying them as a reminder!

Example Communication Rules

1. Each person can only speak from their perspective
2. Each person should avoid making assumptions about the intentions behind their partner's words or behaviors
3. There will be no devaluing of each other
4. Volume of speech must be kept to a 5 (out of 10) or below

Time Out Strategy

Try this when you start to feel heated or begin to break your newly crafted communication rules!

Time Out Steps

1. **Clues:** Notice in yourself when you might need a time out. Call one for *yourself* if you are becoming emotionally flooded. Remember, you should not call a time out for your partner.
2. **Commit:** Always take a time out when your partner asks for one. Decide how long you will need to cool-down and what time you will come back together to resume the discussion. Don't just walk away and forget to come back.
3. **Cool Down:** Take this time to calm yourself. Do something relaxing or something that will take your mind off of the conflict. Don't use this time to strengthen your argument.
4. **Come Back:** Remember to come back together at the agreed upon time. If one of you needs more time, take it and then come back at a later agreed upon time.

Listen & Repeat

It can be hard to listen well when you and your partner are having a heated discussion. It can also be defeating when you feel like your partner has not truly listened to you. That is where the use of Listen & Repeat may be useful!

To begin this exercise, one person must be designated as the "speaker" and the other is designated as the "listener". The speaker then gets a chance to begin sharing about what they are feeling or experiencing in three sentences or less. Once the speaker finishes, the listener will repeat back what they heard the speaker say (kind of like a mirror). The speaker will then continue with three more sentences until they have shared all of their thoughts. Then, switch roles! The listener now gets a chance to share their thoughts and feelings and the speaker must listen and repeat. Continue this exercise until both partners feel heard.