

The Intentional Dialogue

A 5 Step Process

Step 1 – Setting the Appointment

The Sender asks if the Receiver is available to dialogue about a specific subject.

If the Receiver is not available, an appointment should be made or the Receiver should agree to come back to the Sender within a reasonable amount of time to set an appointment.

Step 2 – Connecting

It is important to reestablish a connection between the Sender and the Receiver. This is done by the Sender expressing their appreciation to the Receiver for showing up and their willingness to do the intentional dialogue. The Receiver mirrors the Sender and then expresses an appreciation to Sender for allowing them to come into their world.

Step 3 - Mirroring

Mirroring is the skill of reflecting back, as accurately as possible, the message the other person sends. It means repeating back or paraphrasing what the other person says with:

NO Interpreting, distorting, emphasizing, adding, selecting out what is important, or interrupting
(Unless the sender has sent too much information at one time.)

Being a “flat” mirror means being an accurate mirror where the affective tone and intensity of the sender are also reflected, without mimicking.

Responsibilities of the Receiver

- Focused attention
- Consistent availability and emotional attunement
- Sustained positive curiosity
- The willingness to suspend their own perspective temporarily and be open to hearing the sender’s view of the world
- The willingness to allow the sender to have a view of the world which is different from their own
- The capacity to contain their own reactions and responses and allow the sender to temporarily be the “center” (letting the moment be only about the sender)
- To listen to the sender without interrupting
- Sentence stems and questions are limited to:

“What I heard you say was....” or “If I heard you accurately, you said....”

“Did I get it?” or “Did I get that?” or “Did I hear you accurately?”

“Is there more?” or “Tell me more”.

“In summary, what I heard you say was.... Did I get it all?”

Responsibilities of the Sender

- Make the message about themselves and not the receiver, making “I” statements, not “you” statements
- Avoid shaming, blaming, criticizing, belittling, invalidating the receiver
- Send short amounts, so as to not overload the receiver
- Keep the message focused on one topic and not bring in other issues
- Listen to the mirroring without interrupting
- Verify that the mirroring was accurate
- Send more clearly anything which is not clear or accurate in the mirror
- Avoid repeating when the receiver has mirrored accurately

Step 4 - Validation

Validation is the skill of communicating to another that you can understand the world from their point of view, that you can see the sense that their perspective makes, that you can understand their logic and **accept its validity**. **It does not mean that you agree and share the same perspective.**

Responsibilities of the Receiver:

- Acknowledging that there is more than one way to view the world.
- Leaving your own world view and visiting the world of the other.
- Accepting that another’s perspective is as valid as your own.
- Giving up the idea that there is a right and a wrong way to see things.
- Giving up “being right” and making the other “wrong” if their perspective differs from yours.
- Recognizing that there is no objective truth and that each person’s perception is valid for them.
- Transcending the self.

Sentence stems:

“What makes sense about what you’ve shared is...”

“You make sense to me that...”

“I can understand that you feel (think) given...”

Responsibilities of the Sender:

- To have sent enough information during the mirroring phase to allow the other to understand your feelings and why you see the world the way you do.
- To accept the validation without insisting that the other give up their own perspective and agree with you, see the world the same way you do or feel what you feel.

Step 5 – Compassion/Empathy

Compassion and Empathy is the capacity to imagine how another person might experience whatever it is they are talking about on a **feeling** level, the capacity to imagine their feelings based on what they have said. This may differ from imagining what you would feel in that situation.

Responsibilities of the Receiver:

- Going beyond what the other has said about their feelings and allowing yourself to imagine their feeling experience. Feelings can usually be expressed in one or two words, e.g. angry, happy, frustrated, lonely, loved
- Checking out whether what you imagined is true for them.
- Giving up the symbiotic assumption that the partner feels the same as you would in that situation.
- Giving up the symbiotic certainty that they “must” be feeling what you imagine.

Sentence stems: “Based on what you have said, I imagine that you might feel... Is that it?” or “I hear you say how angry you are. I imagine that might feel overwhelming. Did I get it?”

Responsibilities of the Sender:

- To check out whether what the other is imagining fits one’s own experience.
- To let the other know whether it fits.
- To send a more accurate feeling word if it doesn’t fit.
- To let yourself experience the connection as the other imagines your feelings.