

LOVING SPEECH/DEEP LISTENING PROCESS (SPEAKER-LISTENER)

This is the ground for all effective communication: it is the springboard for every other communication process.

If dialoguing about an issue works, then dialogue. But when dialoguing isn't effective, you need to try something more structured. Try this. Use it especially for any perpetual issues you have with your partner.

I recommend you print the process out. Then carve out some time each week and practice this process once a week for 10 weeks. The topic you choose does not have to be 'hot'. Actually, I recommend you take on 'cooler' topics: the point is to practice. The more you practice, the easier it will be to use when you truly need it.

Underlying principles

- Understanding always precedes compromise or solutions
- There are always two different and equally valid positions
- Be respectful of your partner's point of view
- Drop persuasion in this process

Description:

Chose a topic (for instance, it can be the topic which was stopped when someone became flooded.) One person is Speaker and the other is Listener. You may choose the first Speaker to be the person with the most energy about the topic at hand.

You will go back and forth until both of you have said everything you need to say about this issue and you feel like your partner has heard you – not necessarily agrees with – but has heard you.

Speaker's task: Loving Speech

- Talk honestly about your feelings and beliefs about your position, using "I" statements.
- Do not try and persuade your partner of your point of view. Just explain how you see things. What are you feeling? Needing? What do you *really* want your spouse to know about this situation? Why is it important to you?
- If referencing your spouse's behavior, describe his or her behavior non-judgmentally.
- Strive to get to the heart of the issue for you.

Listener's task: Deep Listening

- The Listener's job is **to understand the Speaker's position/feelings/thoughts about the topic**. Listener can ask clarifying questions, but needs to not give his/her opinion.
- **Ask questions** that draw your partner out. Help him/her go as deeply as they can on the subject.
- **Reflect back** the Speaker's point of view by naming the most salient points. Saying "*I hear you*" or "*I understand everything you're saying*" is not effective here. Please describe what you are hearing, even if it feels like you're repeating what your sweetheart has just said. Mirror back his or her feelings and their important points. Be specific in what you are saying to them.
- **The Speaker** lets you know what was accurate and if need be, can correct what you've understood.
- Be watchful for conversation slipping too quickly into a dialogue.

The Speaker determines when he or she is done. **Then reverse roles**. Go back and forth as much as needed, until both people feel they have said everything they have to say on the topic, and they feel like their partner has heard them.

After both have spoken, it is often a good idea to take a break: get something to drink, stretch. Make sure no one is flooded. You may choose to do the same process again

In short:

1. Chose a topic.
2. One person is Speaker, other is Listener.
3. When Speaker is done, Listener can either briefly summarize the essence of the Speaker's position, to the Speaker's satisfaction, and/or give an empathizing statement.
4. Reverse roles.
5. Continue until both people have said everything they need to say and they feel heard.

In many instances, simply being heard is enough to move us from a hardened position to something softer. When it is an issue where some decision needs to be made, work on the compromise after you've completed this process. Strive to suggest solutions that include your partner's feelings and needs: work to be at your partner's back about his or her point of view as you move toward compromise.