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Ci2i Tool Box

LISTENING WELL

The Ci2i Tool Box is intended to provide simple, straightforward communication tools for couples to assist with improving skills in:

- **BUILDING TRUST**
- **LISTENING WELL**
- **CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK**
- **CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

Very few of us have become experts at any of these skills. We didn't learn them in school because the model is to be "talked at" far more than to "dialogue with." Active and effective listening can prevent many communication mistakes and problems and lead to greater understanding of one another. Constructive Feedback skills allow us to have difficult conversations in positive ways. Conflict management skills help us diffuse a "hot" issue before it gets too far out of hand. These skills work as effectively at work or at home. People often have the exact same communication problems in both places, even though they may show up and play out in different ways.

We urge you to use our free tools to help yourself, to help your partner, and to provide a pathway to richer, more loving conversations about your important relationships

Ci2i: LISTENING SKILLS

The ability to listen well can:

- greatly reduce the potential for conflict and help to diffuse a conflict in process
- help to make your partner feel valued by you
- help to motivate your partner (inclusion is one of the major reasons why people feel motivated and enthusiastic about anything; when people feel heard, they feel included, so it is important to develop healthy norms and behaviors around listening in your every day relationship).

LISTENING WELL REQUIRES THE FOLLOWING:

The **DISCIPLINE** of focusing on the person to whom you are listening. The behaviors which demonstrate your focus are:

- Paraphrasing: this means that you are restating what the person has said, but you are using different words; example: such as, “I just told you that paraphrasing means that you repeat, in alternate words, what the individual has stated.”
- Summarizing: is presenting a condensed version of what the person said, it is a summary.
- Non verbal attentiveness: This means that you maintain eye contact, you are sitting up, leaning forward, looking interested - not tired and bored.
- Verbal attentiveness: such as, “Yes; uh huh; mmmm”

An ATTITUDE of positive acceptance. This means that you accept and value the person and their feelings; you don't have to agree with what they say, but you show interest in it and attempt to understand their point of view. The behaviors that demonstrate positive acceptance are:

- Encouraging: verbally indicates that you are paying attention, interested and wanting to hear more. “I see what you mean; ahh, tell me more about that; that must be difficult for you...”

- Non-verbal support and acceptance: such as eye contact; head nodding; other movements which indicate you are hearing the person.

The SKILL of drawing a person out. Often people will not share everything because they are embarrassed or just not used to having someone who will listen ~ You may miss important information if you don't ask some questions to draw the person out. This will also make him or her feel that you are genuinely interested. The behaviors which demonstrate this ability are:

- Clarifying: asking the person for more information or to say more about something which is not clear. "Could you say more about..." Or "Is this what you meant?" or, "Does that mean...?"
- Probing: going deeper, asking for feelings, getting at the real issues. "And how does that make you feel? How did this whole thing begin? So what is the meaning of this for you?"
- Expanding / elaborating: developing their ideas fully; taking something that you think they are saying or you perceive they are getting at and saying what they haven't said yet. "So you're saying that..." or, "You must be feeling... given that this is happening."

Note:

1. DO NOT USE JUDGMENTAL WORDS OR TONES; do not say that something is stupid, ridiculous, bad, or wrong; do not evaluate;
2. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SOLVE the PROBLEM or "FIX" YOUR PARTNER;
3. DO NOT SUGGEST THAT HIS OR HER FEELINGS ARE WRONG; feelings are at the base of how people respond. It is, therefore, critical that you spend time finding out what the feelings are. Understanding your partner's feelings are key to understanding them.

YOU ARE NOT LISTENING WHEN YOU ARE...

Talking/Interrupting

Judging

Thinking of something else

Rehearsing a response

Trying to "fix" the situation or person

Daydreaming/Spacing

Thinking of advice to give

Editing

Arguing

Doing something else

A PARTNER DIALOGUE

(as adapted from the work of Harville Hendrix, Ph.D.)

There are three reasons to utilize the Partner Dialogue:

- You want to develop a relationship and you have something on your mind.
- You are upset about something and you want to talk about it; or you know the other person has something on their mind and they want to talk about it.
- You want to discuss a topic that might be “touchy.”

The sender picks an appropriate time and place, and asks the receiver if this is a good time to talk. If the receiver agrees, s/he is told the process. If you utilize an objective third person to moderate, the moderator must make certain that both the sender and receiver follow the following process. If you do this on your own, adjust the process and follow the steps without a moderator. It may feel awkward at first, but the steps are very purposeful and proven to work.

The **SENDER** begins and talks about what is on her/his mind.

The **RECEIVER** listens and then:

1. Mirrors back what they heard: “If I got it right,” or “If I heard you correctly, you said...”
2. Checks for accuracy: “Did I get it right?” If the sender says no, then clarify and you mirror again and check again for accuracy. If the sender says yes, then:
3. Invite them to continue: “is there more about that?”

If the receiver goes on overload at any point, signal a pause and mirror back what has been said so far. Then ask for an accuracy check and ask the sender to continue.

4. The receiver repeats #1, 2, and 3 until there is no more the sender wants to say about the topic.
5. The receiver then says, “That makes sense to me because...,” followed by “...and I imagine you must be feeling..., is that correct?”
6. The sender responds simply if that is correct. If it is not quite right, correct the message and the receiver briefly mirrors back.
7. If there is a need by the receiver to respond then the roles are reversed and the process is repeated.