

COURAGEOUS COMMUNICATION

- LISTEN, TRACK SEQUENCES, MAKE AN INVITATION TO HELP COUPLE TALK ABOUT DIFFICULT ISSUES IN A DIFFERENT WAY.

“I want to reflect back what I’m hearing from both of you. This sounds like you have an impasse here related to needs.”

Reflect back cycle.

- TRANSITION

“I can see that this repeating dynamic is causing you both much heartache and upset. I’d like to offer you the opportunity to learn a new way of speaking and listening to one another, one that might very well bring about deeper understanding and connection...and help you out of this difficult pattern.”

- CONTRACT TO BE A PARTS DETECTOR

“I’m here to support you so I’ll slow down or stop if parts begin to overwhelm.”

- INVITE THE COUPLE TO NEGOTIATE WHO WILL SPEAK AND WHO WILL LISTEN.

“So who would like to speak first and to listen first? Either way, I’ll be here to guide you. And then we will reverse it so you each get the chance to speak and listen, either today or next time.”

- COACH THE LISTENER TO UNBLEND

“Listening can be really challenging. As you get ready to listen to (partner) check inside yourself. What do you notice that might block you from listening? What do you notice happening in your body? (or if not embodied – what thoughts are feelings might take over and keep you from hearing (partner)?”

“What are your concerns as you begin to hear (partner) speak?”

(Unblending and addressing manager fears until parts relax and feel ready to listen)

Helpful to add:

“Remember that you are listening to partner’s internal struggle about you. Listening to their perspective and experience.”

Also...

“an important part of a close relationship is about knowing your partner’s experience; understanding the impact you may have had on a part of them.”

“This is about understanding, not agreeing.”

“If you notice yourself getting upset or overwhelmed, look to me for support. I’m here and really want to be available to you.”

- COACH THE SPEAKER TO UNBLEND AND SPEAK FOR PARTS

“Speaker, take time to check inside to clarify what it is that you most want (partner) to understand about you.”

“Bring your awareness to what feelings or parts are most present. What needs to happen to speak for your experience (parts) instead of from them?”

“What are you noticing in your body?” “What is this part concerned would happen if it were to unblend and let you speak for it?”

“If I notice, as you speak, that a part of you seems to be overtaking, I’ll slow you down to support you in speaking about your experience. I know that can be hard – and that you also need to speak about the dynamic between you. At the same time, I want to help you speak in such a way that you’re more likely to be heard.”

“Remember that I’m here for both of you to guide you. And if I notice you getting overwhelmed, I’ll be slowing us down or stopping if I notice you getting overwhelmed. Speaking and listening goes best when our protectors and our bodies have relaxed.”

- STAY PRESENT WITH THE SPEAKER TO MOVE TOWARD VULNERABLE FEELINGS, CHECKING IN WITH THE LISTENER THROUGHOUT. HOLDING BOTH.

"Speaker, when you are really looking to have (partner) spend more time with you and that isn't happening, what do you notice happens inside of you? In your body? What are you saying to yourself?"

"Speaker, I hear that you're hurt and I know that's painful. Can you tune in to that hurt? Can you share more about that experience?" (Deepening toward the exile.)

"Listener, how are you doing? Are you able to hear and stay with (partner)?"

"Listener, I notice that you seem upset as (partner) is speaking. Let's find out what's happening. Speaker, I'll be coming back to you. Right now I want to support (partner) to connect within himself so he/she/they can return to be able to really hear you."

"Listener and speaker, it makes sense that this is coming up as you start to speak and listen. Let's get to know the parts that come up so to offer inner support around speaking and listening to one another. And then returning to one another in more effective and connecting ways."

- RESPONDING

"Listener, can you reflect the core of what you heard from your partner? What made sense? In what way?"

"What might have touched your heart?"

"Can you let (partner) know?"

(If the listener can't respond with empathy and compassion, then the therapist must respond with empathy and kindness. An unmet self-disclosure often evokes a painful shame response followed by a protective reaction.)

However, give this time. Also, a partner might be able to respond somewhat after the therapist speaks openheartedly and validates, reflecting the essence.

- SWITCH AND REPEAT WITH PARTNER IF THERE IS TIME