

Steps and tips for the Speaker:

1. Gentle Start

- a. Keep your voice low and your tone sincere. *Gentle* is key here!
- b. Give the benefit of the doubt: “I’m sure you didn’t mean to...”
- c. “Are you in a place where you’re ready to talk about ____?”
 - If no: “When can we find time to talk about it?”
 - If either party begins to escalate: take a pause, self-soothe, and resume the conversation when you are both inside your Window of Tolerance.



2. Express your feelings about the content’s effects on you.

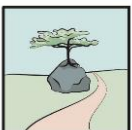
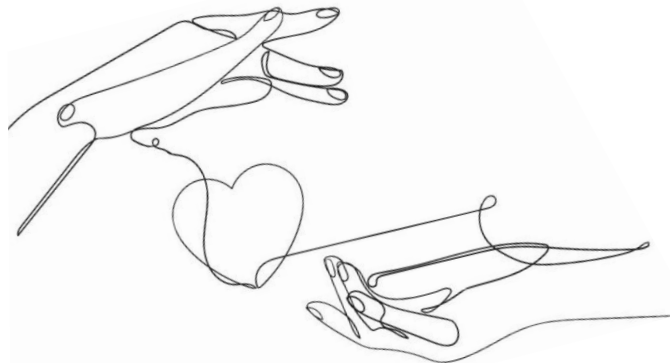
- a. Express how you experienced and *made meaning* of things.
 - Keep it short and to the point.
 - Use “I” language. “I [feel, thought, heard, believed...].”
 - Avoid assuming what others’ intentions may have been.
 - Be *factual*, not *theoretical* – and don’t make a judgment.
- b. **Template:** “I experienced [behavior], and the message I received is [interpretation], and then I felt [emotion, e.g., abandoned, lonely, betrayed, not enough, insecure, afraid, defensive], so I reacted by [reaction behavior; own your contribution to the issue].”
- c. If you can identify it, let them know the underlying *need*.
 - Example: “I want/need to be heard and to know that you value my input.”

3. Leave room for them to respond.

- a. Clearly communicate when you’re done and ready for them to speak.
- b. Wait to switch roles until you feel heard and understood.

4. Optional: Propose a different way of interacting in the future.

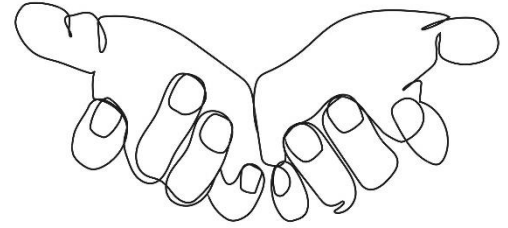
- a. *Note:* This step is not always required, especially if the problem isn’t recurring. Sometimes being understood is enough!
- b. Remember to be specific, positive, and solution-focused.
- c. Steer clear of coming across as accusatory, critical, or passive-aggressive/sarcastic.
 - Example: “Next time, could you please talk to me first before you invite someone to the house?”



Steps and tips for the Listener:

1. Listen.

- a. Do your best to put yourself in their shoes. Put your agenda aside for a few minutes (don't worry, you'll get a turn!).
- b. Be a "soft place for them to land."



2. Paraphrase the content.

- a. What did they say? Summarize using non-inflammatory language. "What I'm hearing is..."
- b. Remember: the content isn't the important part! It's just context to help you understand the meaning they made of it. "The message you received was..."

3. Paraphrase how they are feeling.

- a. Look for the deeper meaning connected to what you know of their wounds/triggers.
- b. Ask questions if you need clarification on something. Be curious, not judgmental.
- c. What have they said about how they feel?
- d. What other emotions might be stirred up in them, if any?

4. Check that your understanding resonates.

- a. Pause and ask them: "Do I have that right?" "Is that what you mean?"
 - If no: Ask *open-ended questions* to clarify, then try steps 1-4 again.

5. Validate their feelings.

- a. Let them know:
 - You *respect* them.
 - You *empathize* with them, even if you don't share their perspective.
 - You consider their feelings *legitimate*. "It matters to me because *you* matter to me."

6. Ask what they need from here.

- a. Ask whether they simply need to be heard or if they'd like to explore solutions.

7. When they feel heard and understood, you can switch roles.

- a. Wait to switch roles until after you validate their feelings and they feel understood.
- b. "Do you feel like I heard and understood you?" If yes, make the transition explicit. "Is it okay if we switch roles now?"

