

INTIMATE CONVERSATION GUIDE

In this exercise there is a **Listener** and a **Speaker**. It is the **Listener's** job to ask the questions, validate the speaker and follow the directions listed below. It is the **Speaker's** job to increase their self-awareness in sharing and avoid using blaming or general statements and words such as *Always, Never, You, and But*. Stick with "I" or "we" Statements. Give both individuals a chance to be the Speaker and the Listener with each other.

Hold hands, face each other, and try to make eye contact during the guide.

This is a revised version of the Comfort Circle Guide originally created by Milan and Kay Yerkovich

1. **Conversation Prompt:** What is one thing stressing, concerning or causing you to have feelings? [Repeat back or summarize: "I hear you saying that..."]

2. **Emotions Being Experienced:** Using the *Emotions Table*, what are the top three emotions you have regarding this? Try to use emotions from more than one category if possible (**bolded** words are the categories).

3. **Rate These Emotions:** Rate the level of intensity of each of these feelings, from 1 (low) to 10 (high). How often have you felt this way?
[Summarize and Repeat Back Questions 1-3, and Validate]

Remember: As the listener your job is to validate the speaker and gain a better understanding of the speaker's emotions and behaviors. Emotions are never right or wrong *even though you may not agree with* or *understand why the speaker is feeling this way*. Try to be understanding/empathetic and put yourself into the speaker's shoes. The goal is to learn to listen rather than reacting or trying to think of a rebuttal or solution.

4. **Physical Sensations:** Do you notice any pressure or tension in your body when you feel this way? Does it impact your breathing at all?

5. **How Did You Act or Behave:** When you have these feelings, what are your behaviors or actions? How did you respond?

6. **What Happened Next:** After responding that way, what happened next? What was the consequence or outcome? [Summarize/Repeat Back 4-6, Validate]

7. **Childhood Experiences:**

a. Do you remember experiencing similar feelings or being in a similar situation as a child?

[If the answer is "no," skip to question #10]

b. If yes, what happened and how old were you?

c. How did you handle these feelings as a child? (behaviors, reactions, emotions, coping methods) [Summarize , Validate]

8. **Childhood Experiences and Now:** How similar are the experiences, behaviors, reactions and emotions you had as a child to what you are experiencing now?

9. **Beliefs:** Did these childhood experiences cause you to form any beliefs about yourself, others, or God? [Summarize, Validate Feelings]

10. **What Do You Need:** When you are feeling this way what can I do to help?

EXAMPLES OF NEEDS: an apology, changed behavior, being heard, taking ownership, reassurance, negotiation, comfort, problem solving, agreeing to disagree.

11. **Response:** Summarize and repeat back the request along with what you are able and willing to do. Be honest! *Don't make promises you cannot keep.*

"I hear you saying that you feel ___ and you need ___, and here's what I can do..."

EMOTIONS TABLE

Choose 1 adjective from 3 different categories to describe how you feel...

HAPPY - cheerful, delighted, elated, encouraged, glad, gratified, joyful, lighthearted, overjoyed, pleased, relieved, satisfied, thrilled, secure, optimistic

LOVING - affectionate, cozy, passionate, romantic, sexy, warm, tender, responsive, thankful, appreciative, refreshed, pleased, comforted, reassured

HIGH ENERGY - energetic, enthusiastic, excited, playful, rejuvenated, talkative, pumped, motivated, driven, determined, obsessed, jittery

AMAZED - stunned, surprised, shocked, jolted, enlightened

ANXIOUS - afraid, uneasy, nauseated, nervous, restless, preoccupied, worried, scared, tense, fearful, terrified, insecure, indecisive, hyper-vigilant, cautious

CONFIDENT - positive, secure, self-assured, assertive

PEACEFUL, relieved, at ease, calm, comforted, cool, relaxed, composed, protected

OVERWHELMED - apprehensive, boxed in, burdened, confused, distressed, guarded, hard-pressed, paralyzed, panicky, tense, weighted down, edgy

TRAUMATIZED - shocked, disturbed, injured, damaged, unloved, unlovable, hated

ANGRY - annoyed, controlled, manipulated, furious, grouchy, grumpy, irritated, provoked, frustrated, hateful, cold, icy, bitter cynical

LOW ENERGY - beaten down, exhausted, tired, weak, listless, depressed, detached, withdrawn, indifferent, apathetic, lazy, bored

ALONE - avoidant, lonely, abandoned, deserted, isolated, cut off, detached, disconnected, unwanted

SAD - unhappy, crushed, dejected, depressed, desperate, hopeless, grieved, heavy, despairing, weepy

BETRAYED - deceived, fooled, duped, tricked, misled, skeptical

CONFUSED - baffled, perplexed, mystified, bewildered, misunderstood, disoriented

ASHAMED - guilty, mortified, humiliated, embarrassed, exposed, stupid

DISAPPOINTED - let down, disheartened, disillusioned, distrustful

INVISIBLE - forgotten, overlooked, unimportant, invisible, disregarded, lost

DESPISED - ridiculed, dumb, belittled, mocked, scorned, shamed, hated, detested