

Making Love Last

Couples Dialogue

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Listener's Role:

Prepare:

- Take a moment to check inside and see if you have any protectors that might make it difficult for you to listen. If you are feeling anxious or defensive, ask those parts to step back and give you room to listen with warm curiosity.
- Being the listener is the more difficult role. Remember that you are listening to the *experience* of your mate and not the truth about yourself. Coach yourself to remain curious and open-hearted.
- This is a time to put your own thoughts and feelings and interpretations aside. This is not a time to analyze, dispute or fix your mate. Simply being present and being interested, attentive, and responsive is enough.
- Tune in to your own body. If you are beginning to feel defensive, angry, or anxious, it is often first noticeable in tension somewhere in your body.

Actively Listen

- Turn yourself toward your mate and give them your full, undivided attention.
- Listen calmly. If you are feeling reactive, remember you don't have to agree with what you are hearing in order to listen and explore. If you are tempted to argue, defend, explain, get angry problem solve, roll your eyes, sigh, check your watch, etc. you likely have a protector that's gotten triggered. Ask your protective parts to calm and step back so you may remain available to your mate.

Steps to Listening:

- Listen. Ask the speaker to stop and let you summarize if it gets too long.
- Repeat back what they have said in your own words and check with your mate for accuracy (be open to correction). This tells your mate your getting what their saying and gives opportunity for them to clarify.
- Ask questions that will deepen your understanding:
 - *How did that make you feel?*
 - *Tell me more, I'd like to understand.*
 - *Are there other times when you have felt like this? Did you ever feel like this when you were a child?*
 - *What are your hopes, expectations, desires regarding this?*
- Avoid "Why" questions. Use "what," "when," "where," "who" instead.
- Keep questions short and inviting.
- Focus on what your mate is feeling and experiencing rather than your own need to make sense of your mate's experience.
- Don't be hesitant to ask the same question again.

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Listener' Role (page 2))

Finish

- Reflect the essence of what you are hearing from your mate. Share what really makes sense to you about their feelings. Express empathy- respond from your heart. Your mate will be encouraged to share vulnerably with you again if they feel you have truly been present in a caring way.
- Invite your mate to share with you what would soothe or help them by asking, "What do you need from me?"
- Share with your mate your willingness to meet their need or desire completely (preferable) or in part.
- Express affection.