

Communication Skills for Couples (Intro)

The goal of this exercise is to promote communication – that is to say, listening, hearing and understanding. You do not have to agree with what you hear. Remember that understanding does not equal agreeing.

1. Face each other, get as close as you are comfortable with.
2. Pick a neutral topic, not one that has been a hot issue (contentious) for you as a couple. Something like “this is what happened in my day” may be a safe place to start.
3. Decide who will speak first and who will listen first.
4. **Speaker** – Share something that happened in your day. Do not give more than 3 – 5 sentences to start with.
5. **Listener** – Once the speaker has stopped, you repeat back what you heard (you are not to **respond** to what was said, you are just **repeating** back what was said). Ask the speaker if you got everything that had been said.
6. **Speaker** – You will either confirm that the listener captured it all, or you will say that he/she missed something and repeat what was missed (please do not add new details to your story). The **Listener** can then repeat back what had been missed and ask for confirmation again. When the **Speaker** is satisfied that he/she was heard, he/she may indicate this.
7. **Listener** – Once the speaker has indicated satisfaction you can ask the speaker if they would like to go on. Repeat process several times.
8. Switch Roles.

Homework:

1. Practice the above using neutral topics.
2. When you feel ready, practice using a warm topic (stay away from the hot, contentious issues for now).