

Making Love Last

Couples Dialogue

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You will each take turns expressing your thoughts and feelings on an issue. One of you will be the speaker for 20 minutes, the other will be the listener. After 20 minutes you will switch roles on the same issue.

Speaker's Role:

Prepare:

- Take a moment to reflect on what you hope will be the outcome of the conversation. What do you want the other to understand? What do you hope will change?
- Notice how you are feeling inside. Are there parts of you that are struggling or hesitant to have this conversation? Ask those parts to step back and allow you to calmly and courageously express yourself. Are there parts that want to attack your mate? Let those parts know you appreciate their attempts to protect you but you'd like them to step back, assuring them that you've got this.

Begin:

- Invite your mate into the conversation. Make a clear statement about your desire to talk about *one* topic. Use a soft, but direct, start-up. ("I would like to talk about our finances" vs. "I'd like to talk about how careless you are with money.") Share with your mate what you hope will be the outcome. (eg: understanding, a decision, etc.)
- As you begin, talk about your own feelings, experiences, and position on the topic. Use "I" statements rather than "You" statements ("I feel anxious when I pay the bills and notice a large bill I was unaware of" vs. "I feel *you* are irresponsible about money.")
- If the listener is causing you to feel unsafe, share what is happening to make you feel unsafe ("I am feeling unsafe because your tone of voice sounds defensive.")
- Express your thoughts and feelings. Speak your truth in the most loving way you can. Be vulnerable. Use feeling words to explain your experience.
- If you notice any part of you feeling anxious or angry, take a moment to notice these protective parts, appreciate their desire to protect you, and ask them to step back and give you room to have this conversation with your partner.

Finish:

- Make a positive request for change. Make a clear statement of what you need or what you would appreciate from your partner. ("I would appreciate a heads up if you spend over \$200.") If they are unable or unwilling to do all of what you ask, ask if they can take a step to move toward change.
- Affirm your mate for their willingness to listen and work this through.