

SPEAKER**LISTENER****1****Describe your own experience** of what happened.

Use “I” statements and avoid commenting on other people’s feelings or interpreting the reasons and intentions behind their actions. Try to present your position without blame or criticism.

As the speaker shares their experience, stay connected to the intention to listen to them with an open heart and mind. Continually reconnect with the intention to listen fully with interest, empathy and sincerity. This is an extremely active process that requires you to resist distraction and really attune to the other people involved. Track your own internal reactions as they arise. Be aware of the thoughts, feelings, judgments, memories or stories that arise within you when listening to the speaker. Silently acknowledge their presence, but then quickly return your full attention to the speaker.

Summarize what the speaker just shared.

You don’t need to recite their words verbatim; you just want to capture the essence of what their experience was, along with the feelings and needs that accompanied their perception of what happened. Do not add any of your own commentary, explanations, analysis or perceptions. It is imperative that the other person feels heard before moving on to more content. When you’re done summarizing, ask the speaker if you got it right, or if they want to change or reiterate something that you may have missed. Postpone sharing your own experience until you switch roles after step 7.

SPEAKER

LISTENER

2

After the listener reflects back what they heard you say, **pause for a moment and check in with yourself** to see if you feel understood by them. If yes, go on to step 4. If no, repeat anything you think is important that the listener may have missed or that you really want them to understand. It's important that you not move on until you really feel understood. It's OK if you need to go back and forth a few times. Be patient and manage any defensiveness or inner frustration that you may feel if they didn't fully get it the first time. Once you feel like they "got it," go to step 3.

If the speaker does not feel fully understood, ask "What do I need to know to understand your experience or perspective better?" Listen to what they said and then summarize what you heard, checking in as to whether you got it or if there is anything else you missed, or anything else they need to say.

Go back and forth as much as the speaker needs to until they feel like you really got it. Stay open and manage any defensiveness or inner frustration that may arise if you didn't get it the first time. Once the speaker feels understood, move to step 3.

SPEAKER

LISTENER

3 Receive the acknowledgement from the listener.

Once the speaker feels like you understand their experience, now it is time to **acknowledge their experience** by saying something like, *"It makes sense to me why you see it this way," "I see why you would have felt the way you did,"* or *"I understand why this was so hard for you,"* etc. Acknowledging your partner's experience does not mean that you have to agree with it 100%. It also doesn't mean that your own experience is invalid by validating theirs. It means that you are connecting with what they went through as if you were listening to a friend who just went through a painful situation and you're empathizing with them.
*Avoid explaining how this makes you feel or launching into an apology.

4 Thank your partner for acknowledging you and then share any positive impact or feelings that you're experiencing as a result of them taking the time to see you and understand your perspective.

Take responsibility: Share with your partner what you see as your contribution to the incident. Without making excuses for your behaviors, share what you specifically regret, what you wish to apologize for and what you see that you could have done differently.

SPEAKER

LISTENER

5 **Accept your partner's apology**, or let them know what you still need in order to really accept their attempt to be accountable.

6 **Take responsibility:** Share with your partner what you see as your contribution to the incident. Without making excuses for your behaviors, share what you specifically regret, what you wish to apologize for and what you see that you could have done differently.

.....

SPEAKER & LISTENER

7 **Switch and repeat** steps one through seven with the other participants.

8 **Take turns sharing** what you each think are the important takeaways and lessons learned from this situation. Decide whether any of these insights could be useful for crafting agreements about how to do things differently in the future.

9 **Make agreements:** Finally, talk about anything that's needed to repair what happened, and how to do it better next time. Share if there is anything that any of you needs from each other to be able to put this behind you and move on. Take turns sharing one to three things that you agree to do differently the next time something like this happens again. Then share one to three things that the other participants could do to make it better next time. If you need to, write these agreements down so that you all can refer to them and keep them fresh in your minds.