

THE IMAGO DIALOGUE SKILL

Conscious & Intentional Exchanges Between 2 People

After clarifying who will be sending and receiving, there are three steps of an Intentional Dialogue. One definition of this kind of dialogue is “the structuring of interpersonal process for the purpose of making genuine contact.” (Nedra Fetterman, PhD)

The Mirroring Step of Dialogue conveys to the sender that I see you and hear you. You exist!

The Validation Step of Dialogue communicates that I understand your point of view. If I walked in your shoes, I might see it the same way. Validation is not synonymous with agreement. It is possible to understand someone’s point of view and not necessarily agree with them.

The Empathy Step of the Intentional Dialogue communicates that I feel for you.

For communication to take place, (clear sending, deep listening and compassionate response) there is a person “sending” information – feelings, needs, concerns, experience – and there is a person setting aside their “world” or agenda for a time and “receiving” the sender’s world.

Too often, in typical interactions, two individuals send at the same time and the information is not received. While words are exchanged, communication does not actually occur. When the roles are reversed, and both “worlds” are heard from, a Dialogue has taken place.

Safety is when two differing worlds can co-exist without feeling criticized, controlled, judged or blamed. They co-exist with dignity and respect. This kind of safety often leads to a new solution that could not have been seen before. When individuals defend their position, there is little or no free, available energy for creative solutions to emerge or to be co-created.

This dialogue process allows for a deeper exploration of underlying emotions or wounds that are influencing current behaviors and reactions. It frequently fosters emotional healing, enhances intimacy, nurtures presence, authenticity and meaningful connection.

THE PROCESS:

The couple decides who will be sending and who will be receiving.
The Sender uses “I” language and the goal is to send from a place of openness and vulnerability.

The Receiver has the intention to listen with an open mind and heart and to be a source of safety for the Sender.

A. MIRRORING:

1. Sender sends one or two sentences.
2. Receiver mirrors: “If I heard you correctly you said....”

“Did I get that right?”

“Is there more about that?”

B. SUMMARY:

When sender says there is no more, receiver summarizes the essence of the message. Receiver asks, “Did I get that right?” Receiver mirrors any additions or corrections to the summary.

C. VALIDATION:

1. Receiver says, “You make sense to me because...”
2. Receiver states the way in which sender’s thinking makes sense.
3. Receiver asks, “Is that the validation you need?”
4. Receiver mirrors any additions or corrections.

D. EMPATHY:

1. Receiver says, “Given all that, I imagine you feel...”
2. Receiver mirrors the sender’s feelings.
3. Receiver asks, “Are those the feelings?”
4. Receiver mirrors any additions or corrections.

