

# The Intentional Dialogue Skill (Imago Relationship Therapy)

Both partners breathe deeply and center themselves to create a safe environment for the other

## SENDER

Make an appointment to send information, feelings, dreams and/or hopes  
State topic in one sentence, be clear on your intention and stay with one topic.  
Speak about oneself, not one's partner.  
Send in small, digestible bites.

## RECEIVER

Temporarily set aside one's world and create internal spaciousness.  
Cultivate a state of curiosity, openness, acceptance, presence, and empathy.  
Receiving partner communicates to the sender that they are available now or when they will be.

## Mirroring

Let me see if I've got you...  
I heard you say, or You said....  
Am I hearing you? or Did I get you?  
Is there more about that?

(This is like unpeeling an onion. The receiver asks, "Is there more about that?" until there is no more. A summary mirror is an optional step at this point.)

## Validation

You make sense to me because...  
I can understand that...given that...  
I can see how you experience it that way because sometimes I do/am...  
(This is the place to take ownership for one's behavior)

## Empathy

I imagine you might be feeling...Are those the feelings? Are there other feelings? (Then mirror additional feelings)

# Getting the Story Straight: Telling Your Truth without Blame. What Happened?

## Just the Facts

(adapted from Hendrix and Hunt, *Getting the Love You Want*)

### *Column A*

- Positive Traits of Caregivers

### *Column B*

- Negative Traits of Caregivers

1. What I wanted and needed most as a child and did not get was\_\_\_\_\_.
2. My deepest frustration in childhood was\_\_\_\_\_.
3. My current frustration with my partner is\_\_\_\_\_ and it's possible that this is connected to some of the unmet needs and undigested experiences I had in childhood.

#### MY UNCONSCIOUS RELATIONSHIP AGENDA:

I am looking for someone who challenges me like my more difficult parent (use words from Column B) in order to get my partner to be more like \_\_\_\_\_(the words in Column A) so that I can get what I wanted and needed as a child which was \_\_\_\_\_ in order to feel\_\_\_\_\_.

# Worksheet for Childhood Challenge, Relational Need and Defense – Seeing the Partner as Vulnerable Yet Whole

(adapted from Hendrix & Hunt, *Doing Imago Relationship Therapy in the Space-Between*)

- When I think about my childhood challenge, I felt either abandoned, neglected, controlled or not good enough. The description that resonates most with me is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I remember feeling \_\_\_\_\_ about that challenge and protected myself by \_\_\_\_\_. Instead of that challenge, what I needed most was \_\_\_\_\_.
- It's possible I brought that need and defense to my significant other.
- How I might feel if that longstanding need were met in my relationship is \_\_\_\_\_.

Partner (who has been listening to this) validates by saying this makes sense and also states how they imagine the sending partner feels. They also add, "I want to grow in the direction of meeting your need. I am willing to look at what I can do to move in your direction."