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## The Imago Dialogue

Step 1 – Mirroring	Step 2 - Validation	Step 3 – Empathy
<p><b>This can help improve your listening and it can help the person speaking feel heard.</b></p> <p>Check to see if your partner is available. <b>Sender</b> - Define the topic. Begin to tell your partner about a topic you wish to discuss</p> <p>Try to speak with no criticism or blaming. Speak from the "I". as much as possible. Take responsibility for your experience/feelings (see repair conversations document).</p> <p>Use "I" language, "I feel...", "The story I am telling myself is," "this is what my mind is making up", "What I would really appreciate is....", "I am noticing that I am getting angry about..."</p> <p><b>Receiver</b> – You may like to mirror some of the above inbetween sentences. Just the odd word or sentence. It helps you make sure you are listening on a deeper level. Hearing their words being repeated back can also help your partner</p>	<p>After some listening and mirroring it is important to try and validate your partner's experience and feelings.</p> <p>This is where you focus on finding what makes sense to your partner in regard to their feelings &amp; experiences. This is not about you trying to understand what they are saying through your own lens. What they are saying may actually appear illogical, but that's ok. It is still their experience and their feelings are VALID! Their experience makes sense to them &amp; you are trying to find out why!</p> <p>There are 2 parts to every validation.</p> <p><b>PART A</b> "I can understand that you feel (the feeling your partner described)..." <b>PART B</b> given that.....(what they are telling you happened in their eyes; their experience).</p> <p>Another version of the above is "It makes sense to me that you feel xyz given that you think xyz/ or you experienced xyz.</p>	<p>After validation it is much easier to offer some empathy to your partner.</p> <p><b>Empathy sounds like this:</b> "I imagine that you might have felt OR might be feeling ....." "</p> <p>Insert a 1 word emotion/feeling/state of being e.g. angry, sad, frustrated, confused, disappointed, anxious, fearful, lonely, abandoned, rejected.</p> <p>Remember mad before sad. Anger often comes before sadness or can mask sadness. It is always worth enquiring as to whether there is any sadness underlying their anger.</p> <p><b>Check it out how they are feeling with them.....</b> "Is that how you feel?"</p> <p>There is no pressure to get this right. It is an opportunity for your partner to check in with their own feelings and it is more than ok for them to say "No, I don't feel like that I feel XYZ."</p>



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reflect on what they are saying and make adjustments or corrections if necessary.

It will feel a bit strange doing this, as you might feel like you are being a parrot, but it can be useful to use this to begin with. The Sender needs to help the receiver by speaking in short, clear sentences and pausing to give them the opportunity to repeat certain points.

**The Receiver would start their mirroring by saying something like:**

“Let me see if I have got you” or “what I heard you say....” or “Is there more?”

**The Receiver** – needs to **be a Flat Mirror (use your partner’s words)**. They also need to self-manage i.e. try to leave your own emotions aside & try to stay present as much as you can. **Use your partners words**. If you use your own words, you risk misinterpreting them.

**The Key to Validation is:**

**USING YOUR PARTNER'S WORDS.**

They have already given you the information you need to validate them. You don't need to make it up!

When you have validated your partner’s words/experiences well, they will be nodding their head because your words will ‘land’ on them and they will feel heard.

**I advise not to just say:**

‘I understand’....this is too easy and can come across in a flippant way. What do you understand exactly? Show them.

If you seem to get the validation ‘wrong’ and your partner says ‘that’s not what I said’, the chances are you haven’t used their words. At least you are trying. So senders, try to have some compassion for their attempts.

Empathy is just a way of saying I can see you might be feeling this here. It’s like you are reaching out and giving them support. It is more effective than using sympathy, which generally ends up in you both becoming victims and saying ‘oh woe is me...yes it’s so bad in this place isn’t it.