



How to listen and talk to your partner

Activity 1 Consider experiences in the past which you think of as good or bad examples of communication.

Complete the following sentence stems.

There was a time I was afraid to talk because...

The last time I expressed myself honestly I experienced....

I remember an occasion where I said what I thought and it really made a difference because...

I remember when I said something that I really regretted when I ...

I felt very troubled after a conversation where...

A time when I felt really listened to and understood was when...

Activity 2

What did you learn from the previous experiences that you listed in activity 1? Are you aware of any patterns that might need addressing to improve your communication with others?

If you are currently in a relationship you can both do activity 1 and 2 and swap notes.

Activity 3

In the table below note down what you really need from a relationship in column 1. This your bottom line that is non-negotiable. In column 2 note down what you might wish for but could negotiate with your partner. If you are in a relationship you can swap lists afterwards. If you are single this list highlights to you what you should be paying attention to when looking for a partner.

What I absolutely need	What I wish for but can negotiate
Eg. Feeling at ease with myself.	Getting a lot of physical affection.

Activity 4 Your contract as a couple

Draw up a list of rules that you would both like to see implemented in order to feel safe and comfortable in your communication with your partner. This contract is going to be particularly important when you are talking about a challenging topic.

For example you may include rules such as

- 1. We don't put the other down by making derogatory comments, rolling our eyes or being sarcastic.**
- 2. We don't shout at each other.**
- 3. We don't use insults.**
- 4. We try to take on board what the other is saying.**
- 5. We assume that we both have the best of intentions for each other.**