

Rules of the Road for the Talk/Listen Dance

Step 1:

One person, the Sharer, talks about whatever he/she wants to for ten minutes. You, the Sharer, choose the topic. The Listener reflects back as accurately as possible what the Sharer is saying without judgment, rebuttal, or any other editorial comment, even positive ones. The Listener contains their reactivity as best they can. The Sharer can correct the Listener if she/he feels that the listener is missing the main points. The Sharer says their full truth without shame or blame.

Step 2:

The other person, the Listener adds the empathy and guesses of feeling and compassion about what the other may be thinking and may be feeling.

There should be two ten-minute sessions scheduled per week. There should be no comment on what the Sharer discussed except in the talk/listen dance. Each person gets a chance to be the Sharer during the week.

Time-Out Rule: If in a talk/listen dance, or any other heated conflictual situation, one member of the couple feels that the communication is too destructive to continue, then they can call for an automatic Time-Out which stops the conversation immediately. The person calling for the Time-Out assumes full responsibility for re-engaging the conversation within a minimum of 24 hours. Allows for an instant pause.

Please remember that this clunky communication exercise is simply designed to allow each member of a couple to discuss difficult and vulnerable feelings in a safe manner. It is neither a decision making or a problem solving technique. Please don't judge the value of this exercise on whether it makes you feel closer in the moment.