

## Conscious (Imago) Dialogue: Instructions for the Receiver

### 1. **LISTEN:**

As your family member/partner speaks, listen without interrupting until he/she pauses or until you ask them to pause.

### 2. **MIRROR:** “What I heard you say is . . . . .”

When your partner pauses, repeat back everything you heard them say, without judging it, critiquing it, analyzing it or significantly adding to it, or taking away from it. And attempt to do so in an “attended” way, meaning, reflect back with a tone that more or less mirrors that of the sender. In other words, if what your partner has just shared is sad, you don’t want to be laughing or even smiling as you mirror back.

Paraphrasing is fine but be careful to avoid **SENDING** while in the Receiver role. The magic of dialogue lies in allowing the Sender to be **COMPLETELY** in charge of where the conversation goes. Once you ask a question or insert a comment or tone of voice not sent by the Sender, the dialogue is now about your agenda, not theirs.

#### Check it out: “Did I get that?” or “Did I get you?”

Check to make sure you correctly mirrored all that your family member/partner said. If your partner clarifies or corrects something, listen, then mirror again. Continue until your partner says you got it.

#### Ask if there’s more: “Is there more?” or “Tell me more.”

If your family member/partner adds more, mirror, check it out, and then ask, “Is there more?” again. Repeat until your partner says there’s no more.

### 3. **SUMMARIZE:** “If I got it all . . . .” or “I think the gist of what you’re saying is . . . .”

.“ When done, check for completeness: “Did I get it all?” Mirror any additions your partner makes.

### 4. **VALIDATE:**

“You (or what you’ve said,) make(s) sense to me because . . . .”

Validate the content of what your partner is saying. Remember, validation is not about agreement. Rather, it is about letting the other know that what they are saying makes sense from their point of view. (“I can see how when I didn’t speak to you after I came home last night, you thought I was mad at you. That makes sense.”)

If something your partner says doesn't make sense, ask them to help you understand by asking them to say more about that. "Help me understand, could you say more about . . ."

**Check it out:** "Does it feel like I'm getting you?"

5. **EMPATHIZE** "I can imagine that you might be feeling . . . (angry, hurt, scared, frustrated, etc.)."

To empathize means to imagine what another person is feeling about what they are saying or experiencing. Feelings can be distinguished from thoughts in that feelings can generally be described in one word: hurt, excited, hopeful, etc.

If you have trouble empathizing, try to imagine how it might feel if the tables were turned. Or, try to recall a time when someone did something to you that is similar to what your family member/partner is describing now. Although you may well have reacted somewhat differently than your family member/partner, you can still utilize your memory of that experience to help you understand and empathize with your family member/partner's feelings.

**Check it out:** "Is that how you feel?"

**Finish**

Once the Sender has said all they have to say, and you have Mirrored, Validated and Empathized, your family member/partner may ask if you want a turn. If they do not, you may politely ask if you can respond.