

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

The **Sender** in a **Conscious Dialogue** shares equal responsibility with their communication partner for the success or failure of any dialogue. Remaining calm and conscious is usually easy when the topic is positive, for instance when someone is expressing **appreciation**. However, when the topic has some energy around it, we often slip into “reactive sending”, a sure invitation to **Dialogue-Failure!**

Following these steps when the topic is a little more touchy will help insure a positive outcome for yourself, your family member and your relationship/s!

### 1. **Make an appointment!**

In a Conscious Relationship, all issues are discussed “by **appointment only!**” Go to your family member/partner and ask if this is an OK time to talk. If they say “no”, respect their answer and ask them to let you know, sometime in the next 24-48 hours, when they’d be willing to dialogue. If it’s important to you, establish who will initiate this. If your family member is someone who finds such talks difficult, be willing to take the lead. Especially if it is a really touchy topic, it helps to make sure each of you have your basic needs for sleep and hunger met before you get into an important dialogue.

### 2. **Statement of Intentionality**

Begin with an introductory statement that helps your partner feel safe about “what” and “how” you are going to send. “I want you to know that I am sharing this with you because I care about our relationship.” Or, “I want this to be a win-win discussion.”

### 3. **Pause**

Practice pausing periodically so your family member/partner can mirror back what you’ve said. If your partner does not mirror, ask them to do so in a non-demanding manner.

### 4. **Stay focused**

Attempt to avoid rambling off down side roads – stick to your topic and make it **only one topic per dialogue!**

### 5. **Use “I” statements**

“I” statements are those that begin with the word “I” and describe how you feel and /or need or desire. References to others are made without judgment and/or attribution of motive. “When you interrupt me, I feel disrespected and dismissed.” Or, “When you don’t call, I start to get scared and angry . . .” “I” statements reduce the blaming caused by “you” statements. (“You don’t care about my feelings . . .” “You make me . . .”) Note: “I think that you . . .”, does not qualify as an “I” statement.

## **6. Maintain non-threatening, non-accusatory tone of voice and body language**

If your voice is angry, your family member/partner will have no choice but to put up their defenses and they will have a difficult time mirroring. If you cannot remove the anger, it is not a good time to ask for a dialogue. Wait until you are more calm.

## **7. Select your words carefully**

It is inflammatory to blame, label, mind-read or use absolutes (e.g., "you always" and "you never"). It is quite acceptable to say: "I feel unloved when you don't talk to me". It is NOT acceptable to say: "You never talk to me because you are selfish and do not love me."

## **8. Actively reinforce positive behaviors!**

If you like the way your family member/partner mirrors what you have said, SAY SO!  
"Thank you for hearing me. It really helped."

## **9. To end...**

When done, thank your family member/partner for listening and ask if they would like a chance to reply. If they say "yes", move into the role of the Receiver.