

Expression Skills

(Use "I Feel statements" to express your thoughts and feelings when expressing yourself)

(Avoid using "you" statements and accusations or criticisms; state how you feel and what you value.)

1. 'I want to use skilled communication to discuss something important because I think it will help us.'

2. 'Is this a good time to talk?' *(If not schedule a time when both people can be attentive and present)*

3. 'I really appreciate _____ (Start with something good a sincere complement) _____'

4. 'When _____ (fact or issue you want to discuss) _____'; *(Be specific)*

5. "I feel/felt/value _____ (feeling words) _____,"

"Because/about _____ (reason) _____,"

"And I want/hope for _____ (good intention) _____,"

6. When appropriate:

"Will you _____ (reasonable request / action) _____."

Understanding Skills

(Use Understanding Skills and "You Feel" statements when the other person is expressing themselves or is in need of support. Use understanding skills when someone feels hurt or defensive)

1) Put away distractions

2) Use good attending skills

3) **Turn off your opinion, your desire to fix, trying to solve, or your issue, attempts to justify self.**

4) Repeat back what they said

5) Paraphrase what they said

6) 'You feel/felt/value _____ (feeling words) _____,'

"Because/about _____ (reason) _____,"

"And you want/hope for _____ (good intention) _____,"

7) "You feel _____ (deep underlying meaning for them) _____."

(The simplest expression of the Understanding Skills is to say "You Feel (feeling word)" and be quiet and wait for them to affirm your guess or to state more accurately their feelings or values.)

Expression and Understanding skills are needed so each person can articulate their feelings and values and most importantly help the other person experience being understood and have their feelings and values accepted. Being able to state your partner's feelings, values and priorities and they be able to state and accept your feelings, values, and priorities is the foundation of relationships and a prerequisite for the steps of problem solving, conflict resolution and joint decision making and goal setting. Understanding your own feelings and values and the reasons those feelings and values are experienced and held is also the foundation of emotional self-regulation and mindful living.

Using skillful communication skills avoids damaging the relationship unintentionally.

When you feel criticized, your partner probably does not feel understood. Use understanding skills until your partner feels understood.

The person initiating using skilled communication techniques begins with expression skills. A ground rule should be the person asking for communication using skills brings their topic to the discussion and this topic remains the only topic discussed until the couple agrees that both people feel understood or they agree to postpone the discussion.

So ONE TOPIC AT A TIME, no flooding or changing topics.