



Listening to Understand

Worksheet

Start by giving each other the benefit of the doubt and acknowledging the other person's positive intentions in engaging in this discussion with you. Then:

1. **PREPARE:** Get paper and a pen/pencil for each person. (Really!) Individually jot down any preliminary items you each want to discuss. No taking notes on computers/devices.
2. **SHARE:** Person A talks, Person B listens and takes notes as needed. Only interrupt to ask for repetition or simple clarification (e.g. "what did you mean by X?"). Take notes to:
 - a) remember your partner's key points
 - b) jot down any comments you want to make later
 - c) jot down any questions you want to ask later
3. **REFLECT:** Once Person A has shared everything they want to include, Person B reflects back to them what was understood. Person B does not share any of their own thoughts yet. No judgment, evaluation, interpretation or contradiction. B uses objective, neutral language to summarize Person A's main points, e.g.:
 - a) "You said you feel like..."
 - b) "You said you need X... but that I..."
4. **CLARIFY:** If Person B has reflected something inaccurately, either because they misheard, or because Person A misspoke, this is the time for Person A to clarify as needed. Then Person B should REFLECT again to confirm new understanding. Repeat steps 3 and 4 as needed before moving on to step 5.
5. **ACKNOWLEDGE:** Once Person A feels their points have been heard and understood, Person B should
 - a) **Acknowledge** anything heard that they can empathetically appreciate
 - b) **Apologize** as necessary, and
 - c) **Appreciate - thank** the other person and give them credit for anything as appropriate.
 - d) Person A should ultimately **thank** Person B for listening, and for any acknowledgement, apology or appreciation given.
6. **TRANSITION:** Person B can now add their perspective. Change roles and repeat Steps 2-5. Note: Do NOT use this as a chance to shoot down every tiny detail, point-counterpoint style! Be selective as you reflect on your notes, addressing the most important points and patterns first.
7. **REPEAT:** Repeat all steps as needed, taking notes without interrupting, listening to understand, reflecting, clarifying, acknowledging and thanking until a clear end point or temporary stopping point is mutually reached.

Take a break whenever needed and re-acknowledge each other's positive intent when you resume.

Remember: You may not reach a complete solution each time; the goal is to increase mutual understanding and respect in order to "move the needle" with each conversation.