

## TIPS FOR PLANNING A CONVERSATION

What is it exactly that you want in terms of what really matters to you?

1. Connection. When there is real connection, the rest can be worked out.

2. What else? Maybe clarity or integrity or peace etc.

3. What is your plan if you don't get what you will ask for?

Thinking about this before your interaction takes the pressure off the other person because you're not coming at them with urgency.

Urgency feels like a demand.

You will have in your back pocket another strategy to try to meet your needs.

Or you will be prepared to process –mourn- your unmet need, or whatever new pain is triggered by the other's saying "No."

4. Setting it up.

Get self-connected, grounded.

Ask, is this a good time to talk?

I'd like to bring up - - - are you in a place to hear me about that?

A. Express why this matters to you, I want clarity, understanding between us.

Be prepared to back off if you don't get a yes back.

You can ask if another time would work. Or you might ask "Would you think about us having a conversation about this topic and how we can do it so it's comfortable for you?"

5. When the conversation takes place. Here is some sample language.

"When this specific thing happened. "I heard you say. . ."

"I tell myself. . ." "Is this what you mean?" "Would you help me understand?"

Accept what the other says at face value! Even if it hurts and seems outrageously unkind or incorrect to you, it is the other's truth in that moment as best as they can express it.

"Sounds like you've been feeling kind of . . . . and what you really want is . . . . Is it kind of like that?"

If you can agree with anything they say, do so. "I can see how my rushing out the door when you really wanted me to listen to you would feel pretty terrible." Even if you have a very different version of the incident.

You may get some strong accusations back at you. What do you do? If you can breathe and stay centered in yourself and do whatever you practice to keep you from reacting like, saying to yourself "This is not about me," or "I'm ok," continue listening and reflecting back.

At some point ask what he or she would like from you. "Do you want to know that I understand you?" "Is there something you want to hear from me?"

If you come to a place where you cannot tolerate the pain nor trust yourself not to react, say so. "I'm beyond my capacity now and I want to take a break to take care of myself. I'll reconnect with you about this another time. I love you."

It's important to KEEP THE DOOR OPEN.

I like the way Joshua Coleman talks about this in his book *When Parents Hurt*.

*"Continuing to reach out is a parental act. It's a demonstration of concern and dedication... Continue to extend invitations, even if you know they'll refuse. . . show you're strong enough to keep fighting for the relationship, and show that you're willing to have a dialogue about the past."*

In the meantime, keep giving yourself empathy, reach out to receive empathy and support from others, and savor all the love, beauty and joy that you find in other parts of your life.

*“One who covers her heart, covers the light of the day.”*  
*Al-Andalus poetess circa 750CE*

