

Mirroring is the skill of reflecting back, as accurately as possible, the message the other person sends. It means repeating back or paraphrasing what the other person says without interpreting, distorting, emphasizing, adding, or selecting out what is important. Being a good listener means being an accurate mirror where the affective tone and intensity of the sender are also reflected, without mimicking.

Responsibilities of the Receiver (Listener): Mirroring requires

- focused attention
- durable curiosity
- the capacity to tolerate another having a view which is different from one's own
- the capacity to contain one's own reactions and responses and let it just be about the other.
- consistent availability and emotional attunement
- the willingness to suspend one's own perspective and be open to hearing another's view

Questions are limited to: What I heard you say was ... or If I heard you accurately, you said

Did I get it? or Did I hear you accurately?

Is there more? Tell me more.

In summary, what I heard you say was ... Did I get it all?

Responsibilities of the Sender (Speaker) are

- to talk about oneself not the partner, making I (not you) statements
- to avoid all shaming, blaming, criticizing, belittling, invalidating, etc., of the partner
- to send short amounts so as not overload the other; it is not a memory test
- to keep one's message focused on the topic, not bring in other issues
- to listen to the entire mirror without interrupting
- to check the mirror and see if it is accurate
- to send more clearly anything which is not clear or accurate in the mirror
- to avoid repeating oneself when the other has mirrored accurately

Validation is the skill of communicating to another that you can understand the world from their point of view, that you can understand their logic and accept its validity. It does not mean that you agree and share the same perspective.

Responsibilities of the Receiver: Validation requires that you

- acknowledge that there is more than one way to view the world.
- leave your own world view and visit the world of the other.
- accept that another's perspective is as valid as your own.
- give up the idea that there is a right and a wrong way to see things.
- give up being right and making the other wrong if their perspective differs from yours.
- recognize that we cannot know objective truth except through our own perceptions and each person's are valid for them.
- transcend the self.

Sentence stems: You make sense to me that ... or I can understand that you feel (think) ... given that ...

Responsibilities of the Sender:

- to send enough information to allow the other to understand your feelings and experience
- to accept the validation without insisting that the other give up their own perspective and agree, think or feel the same.

Empathy is the capacity to imagine how another person might experience whatever it is they are talking about on a feeling level, based on what they have said. This may differ from imagining what you would feel in that situation. This is the moment when partners can truly experience the connection of vibrating simultaneously on the same emotional note.

Responsibilities of the Receiver: Empathy requires

- going beyond what the other has said about their feelings and allowing yourself to imagine their feeling experience. Feelings can usually be expressed in one or two words, e.g. angry, happy, frustrated, lonely, loved;
- checking out whether what you imagined is true for them is actually what they are feeling;
- giving up the symbiotic assumption that the partner feels the same as you would in that situation;
- giving up the symbiotic certainty that they must be feeling what you imagine.

Sentence stems: Based on what you have said, I imagine that you might feel ... Is that it?
I hear you say how angry you are. I imagine that might feel overwhelmed. Did I get it?

Responsibilities of the Sender are

- to check out whether what the other is imagining fits one's own experience;
- to let the other know whether it fits;
- to send a more accurate feeling word if it does not fit;
- to let yourself experience the connection as the other imagines your feelings.