



 Safe Conversations®



XI - Dialogue Guide

# Current Need and Past Challenge



# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PAST

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The needs we have in all of our relationships inevitably stem from experiences we had in the past. They could be distant memories or recent challenges, either way, the past has a powerful impact on our bids for connection in current relationships.

Our relationship needs show up in many ways. There may be a pattern or a regularity. For example, we may need to arrive at the airport hours in advance triggered by memories of late or chaotic travel in our youth. Or needs may increase in intensity over time. What may have been a minor frustration in earlier years could become untenable as we get older. Exploring how the past impacts current relationships helps us ask for what we want or need to be safe and connected, in every part of our lives.

The Current Need and Past Challenge Dialogue is a structured guide for creating connection instead of rupture when we articulate our needs, and leads to empathy and respect for one another - our intimate partners, family members, peers and colleagues.



# THINKING ABOUT WHAT WE NEED

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Before having a dialogue about relationship needs, think about **the need you experience in your most significant relationship**. This need could apply to a significant other, a family member, friend or colleague.

Study the list below and select and circle one of the needs you currently experience. If needed, you may expand with notes in the space provided.

## The Relationship Need I Experience is:

- To be free to do what I want to do with my time
- To be trusted by others for my thinking and my decisions
- To have my emotional and physical boundaries honored when I set them
- To experience recognition and appreciation for my perspective
- To experience what I do being valued by others
- To experience interest in what I am talking about
- To be asked for my opinion on subjects being discussed
- To be included when plans are being made
- To experience others being curious about my experiences in life
- To be valued for who I am as well as what I do

### Notes:

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# HOW THE PAST IMPACTS THE RELATIONSHIP NEED

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Associating a past challenge or experience with a current relationship need is a powerful way of connecting with those who can help fulfill our needs.

**Understanding and sharing what has occurred in our life to trigger a need is a pathway to Validation and Empathy** - the key elements for safety and connection.

Study the list below, and circle the past challenge that best describes what triggered the need you identified on the previous page. If needed, you may expand with notes in the space provided.

## The Past Challenge that Triggered my Need is:

- Experiencing being controlled by others
- Being told what to think and how to express my thoughts
- Being told what and how to feel
- Experiencing my thoughts and feelings as not important to others
- Being told what to do and how to do it
- Feeling invisible, unseen and unvalued
- Feeling abandoned and alone
- Experiencing myself as insignificant
- Receiving no support for what I thought and felt
- Feeling that what I wanted and liked was uninteresting to others

### Notes:

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# RELATIONSHIP COPING STRATEGIES

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## MAXIMIZERS AND MINIMIZERS

Relationship needs and the memories that trigger them often create anxiety and lack of safety. We begin operating in the lower brain and adopt natural coping strategies that either MAXIMIZE or MINIMIZE our energy, as a matter of self-protection.

In Safe Conversations, we call these adaptations Hailstorms (*Maximizers*) and Turtles (*Minimizers*). Because our coping strategies effect how we relate to others - and they to us - it is helpful to identify our tendency.

Study the descriptions below and circle the one you think best describes you.

### MAXIMIZER (Hail Storm)

#### When I get upset, I tend to:

- Express myself with passion and energy, using many words
- Repeat myself and interrupt others
- Feel an intense need for a response
- Express many needs and listen poorly
- Adopt a victim stance

### MINIMIZER (Turtle)

#### When I get upset, I tend to:



- Feel tight inside and do not verbalize my emotions
- Adopt an “I’ll take care of myself/I don’t need anyone” attitude
- Express very few, if any, needs and exclude others from my personal space
- Listen poorly and attempt to figure things out by myself
- Remove myself from my relationships without explanation



# SHARING A CURRENT RELATIONSHIP NEED AND PAST CHALLENGE

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## INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1 Use the exercises on pages 30, 31 and 32 to prepare for this dialogue.
  - 2 Decide who will be the first Sender   
and who will be the Receiver 
  - 3 Follow the structure and use the sentence stems precisely as indicated.
  - 4 When all the steps are completed, switch roles and repeat the process.
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## MAKING AN APPOINTMENT



I would like to have a conversation about a Relationship Need I have (*at home, at work or in my community*). Are you available now?

Yes, I'm available now.



**Connect Non-Verbally: Make eye contact and take a breath before beginning the dialogue.**



## SHARE AN APPRECIATION



Before I start, I would like to share an appreciation.  
I appreciate that you \_\_\_\_\_ (*something special or important about the Receiver*).

**Note to the Receiver: If at any point in the dialogue you get overloaded, raise your hand and say: “I’d like to Mirror you back so far.”**

Mirrors

Let me see if I got it. You appreciate that I \_\_\_\_\_



Checks for Accuracy

Did I get it?



Verifies Accuracy

Yes, you got it.



Thanks for sharing that.



Thanks for receiving it.





## SHARING A RELATIONSHIP NEED



Now I'd like to tell you about a relationship need I have  
(*at home, at work or in my community*). This need is \_\_\_\_  
(*the need circled on page 30*).

Mirrors the Need

Let me see if I've got it. You shared that  
the Relationship Need you have (*at home,*  
*at work or in your community*) is \_\_\_\_.



Checks for Accuracy

Did I get it?



Verifies Accuracy

Yes, you got it.  
- or -  
Yes, and I also said \_\_\_\_.



Shows Curiosity

Is there more you'd like to say  
about this Relationship Need?



**Receiver continues mirroring, checking for accuracy and asking  
"Is there more?" until the Sender is ready to move on.**

## SHARING A PAST CHALLENGE OR EXPERIENCE



This Relationship Need reminds me of a challenge I had  
in my past (*recent or distant*) which is \_\_\_\_ (*the Past*  
*Challenge circled on page 31*).





## Mirrors

Let me see if I've got it. The Relationship Need you have reminds you of a past challenge which is \_\_\_\_.



## Checks for Accuracy

Did I get it?



## Verifies Accuracy

Yes, you got it.

- or -

Yes, and I also said \_\_\_\_.



## Shows Curiosity

Is there more about that?



**Receiver continues Mirroring, checking for accuracy and asking "Is there more?" until the Sender says: "There is no more."**

When I remember this, it makes me feel  
(*sensations, feelings, emotions*), and I respond as a  
Maximizer – *or* – Minimizer by doing \_\_\_\_.



## Mirrors

Let me see if I've got that. When you remember this past challenge, you feel \_\_\_\_, and you respond as a Maximizer – *or* – Minimizer by doing \_\_\_\_.





#### Checks for Accuracy

Did I get it?



#### Verifies Accuracy

Yes, you got it.

- or -

Yes, and I also said \_\_\_\_.



#### Shows Curiosity

Is there more about that?



**Receiver continues Mirroring, checking for accuracy and asking “Is there more?” until the Sender says: “There is no more.”**

## EXPRESSING HOW THE NEED COULD BE MET

One way I’d like my Relationship Need to be met is \_\_\_\_.

This would allow me to do/think/act \_\_\_\_.



#### Mirrors

Let me see if I got that. One way you’d like your Relationship Need to be met is \_\_\_\_.

This would allow you to do/think/act \_\_\_\_.



#### Checks for Accuracy

Did I get it?





### Verifies Accuracy



Yes, you got it.

- or -

Yes, and I also said \_\_\_\_.

### Shows Curiosity

Is there more about that?



**Receiver continues Mirroring, checking for accuracy and asking “Is there more?” until the Sender says: “There is no more.”**

## SUMMARIZING

Let me see if I got all of that. You are experiencing a need in your relationships (*at home, work or in community*) which is \_\_\_\_.

This Relationship Need reminds you of \_\_\_\_ (*challenge in the past*).  
And it makes you feel \_\_\_\_ and you respond as a Maximizer – or –  
Minimizer by doing \_\_\_\_.

One way you’d like your Relationship Need to be met is \_\_\_\_\_. This  
would allow you to do/think/act \_\_\_\_\_.



### Checks for Accuracy

Did I get it all?



### Verifies Accuracy



Yes, you got it.

- or -

Yes, and I also said \_\_\_\_.



## VALIDATING

You make sense! What makes sense is that the Relationship Need  
you have, which is \_\_\_\_ reminds you of \_\_\_\_.  
And it makes sense that this memory causes you to Maximize *or*  
Minimize by doing \_\_\_\_.



Checks for Accuracy

Is that a good validation?



**Sender: Confirms the validation. If anything was not validated,  
asks to send that part again.**

## EMPATHIZING

Expresses Empathy

I can imagine that if your Relationship Need, which is  
\_\_\_\_\_ was met by \_\_\_\_\_ (*new actions or behaviors*), you  
would feel \_\_\_\_\_ (*glad, happy, fulfilled joyful, etc*).



Checks for Accuracy

Is that your feeling?  
Are there other feelings?





### Verifies Accuracy



Yes.  
- or -  
Yes, I'd also feel.

## CLOSING

Thank you for sharing all that with me.



Thank you for listening.

**Give each other a handshake or high five, or with an intimate partner give each other a one minute hug.**

**When all the steps are completed, switch roles and repeat the process.**