Safe Conversations[®]

DIALOGUE GUIDE

How Past Challenges Impact Current Relationships

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Purpose of This Dialogue

Relationship challenges in our past inevitably show up in our relationships in the present. We may experience patterns that increase in intensity over time. Or past challenges can create persistent frustrations that inhibit our ability to connect with others in every part of our life.

Sharing about Past Relational Challenges and Current Relational Needs in a safe, structured dialogue is the pathway to becoming more empathic and less judgmental and it deepens connection and mutual respect for one another – our intimate partners, our family, peers and colleagues.

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Relational Challenge in the Past

Past Relational Challenges influence how you interact with others in the present, and how they interact with you. Describing these challenges guides us to identify the need we bring to the present.

Study the list below and **select and circle one (only one)** that best describes your biggest relational challenge with significant others in the past. If none of them describe your Past Relational Challenge, write it in your own words in the Notes on the next page.

My biggest Relational Challenge in the Past was:

- 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:

Relational Need in the Present

The Relational Challenge you experienced in the past creates a Relational Need you bring into the present - which impacts how you relate to others and how they relate to you. Identifying that need will help you understand all your relationships, and sharing this need with others will help them understand your behavior in the present.

Study the list below and **select and circle one (only one)** that best describes your biggest Relational Need with significant others in the present. If none of them describe your Relational Need, write it in your own words in the Notes on the next page.

My biggest Relational Need in the Present 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:

Minimizer vs. Maximizer

Relational challenges in our past triggered anxiety about our survival, to which we responded by MAXIMIZING or MINIMIZING our energy to protect ourselves. Whenever our Relational Need in the present is not met, we re-experience that anxiety and automatically defend ourselves by Maximizing or Minimizing our energy.

In Safe Conversations, we call these adaptations Turtles (Minimizers) and Hailstorms (Maximizers) for graphic impact, and since they are automatic, to remove judgment. Because they affect how we relate to others, and in response, how they relate to us, it is important to identify the defensive strategy you typically use when you feel threatened.

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

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.

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.

Notes:

Sharing My Early Challenge & Need

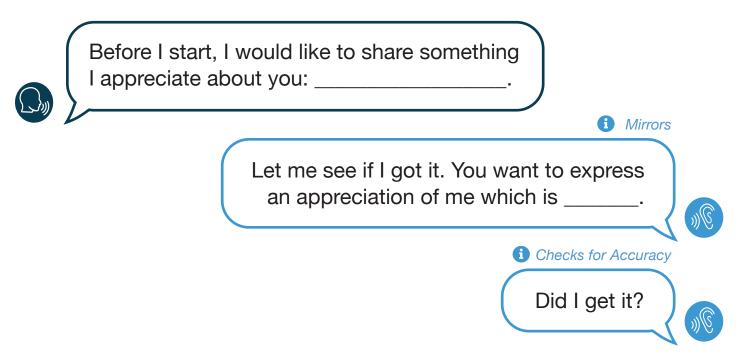
MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

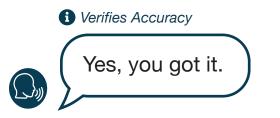
I would like to share my Past Relational Challenge and a Present Relational Need that impacts how I relate to others in my current relationships (at home, at work or in my community). Are you available now?

Yes, I'm available now.

Connect Non-Verbally: Make eye contact and take three deep breaths in sync.

SHARING A PAST CHALLENGE AND RELATIONAL NEED



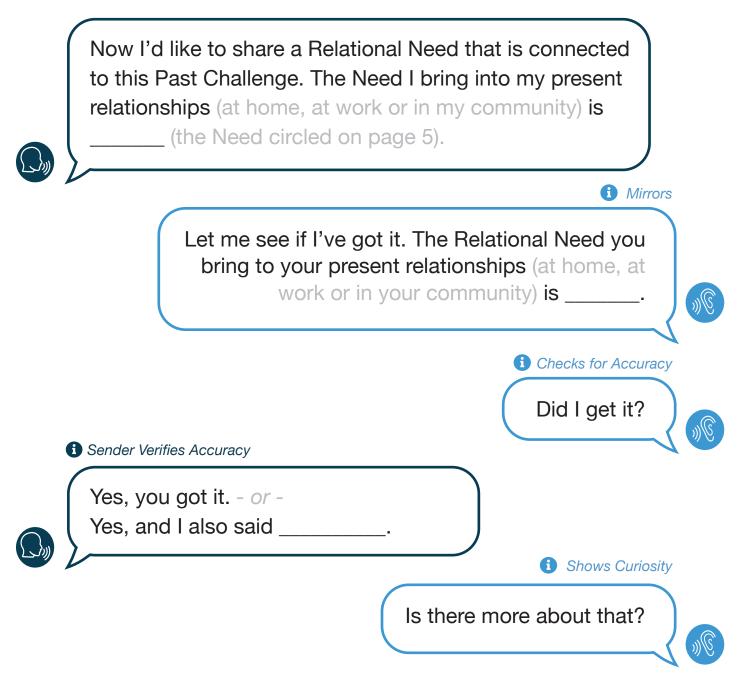


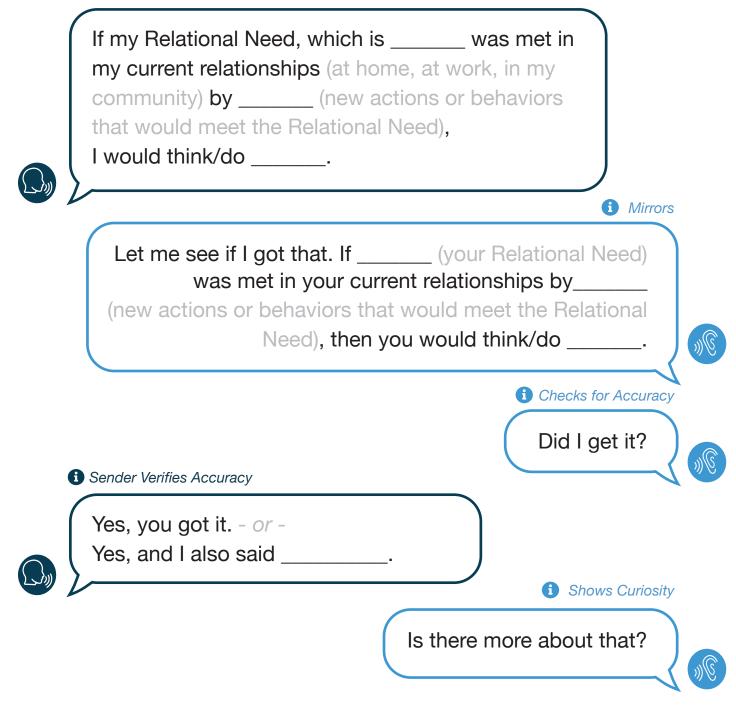
SHARING A PAST RELATIONAL CHALLENGE





SHARING THE RELATIONAL NEED





SUMMARIZING

