

COMFORT CIRCLE GUIDE FOR THE LISTENER

Listener: Increase your self- and other-awareness by listening to the other and staying with their experience. Ask the questions below and follow directions within the [brackets]. Remember: the goal is **NOT** to fix or problem solve but to gain understanding. **Speaker:** Limit yourself to a few sentences at a time, and avoid blaming “you always, you never...” and other accusations. Stick with “I” statements.

1. **PROMPTING EVENT:** Share with me one thing that is stressing you or causing you to have feelings.
[SUMMARIZE: “I hear you saying that...”]
2. **IDENTIFY FEELINGS:** Using the list of soul words, please share with me the top three feelings you have regarding this, and try to use more than one category.
3. **RATE FEELINGS:** Rate the intensity of each of these 3 feelings, from 1 (low) to 10 (high). How often do you feel this way? [SUMMARIZE 1-3, and VALIDATE] *Reminder: Try not to judge the feelings you are hearing as right or wrong. As a listener you may **not** agree with or understand the feelings or behaviors. The goal is to keep listening to gain understanding rather than just reacting. The more we listen the more likely we will reach a resolution.*
4. **PHYSICAL REACTIONS:** How do you experience these feelings in your body (places of pressure, tension, pain) and what do you notice about your breathing (shallow, deep, fast, slow)?”
5. **BEHAVIORS/ACTIONS:** How did you express these emotions—what were your behaviors/reactions?
6. **CONSEQUENCES:** When feeling and responding that way, what were the consequences, what happened next?
[SUMMARIZE 4-6, VALIDATE FEELINGS]
7. **CHILDHOOD FEELINGS:**
 - a. Did you experience these feelings as a child? [If the answer is “no,” skip to question #10]
 - b. What was happening and how old were you? [SHOW APPROPRIATE EMPATHY]
 - c. How did you manage these feelings as a child? [SUMMARIZE, VALIDATE FEELINGS]
8. **CHILDHOOD BELIEFS:** If you had these feelings as a child, did you form any beliefs about yourself, others, or God as a result of these feelings? [SUMMARIZE, VALIDATE FEELINGS]
9. **RELATE PAST TO PRESENT:** What percentage of your current feelings and reactions might be *fueled* by and *intensified* by your past experience?
10. **BRING FEELINGS AND NEEDS INTO RELATIONSHIP:** When you have these feelings what do you need?

EXAMPLES OF NEEDS: an apology, changed behavior, being heard, taking ownership, reassurance, negotiation, comfort, problem solving, agreeing to disagree.
11. **YOUR RESPONSE:** [SUMMARIZE REQUEST] “I hear you saying that you feel ___ and you need ___, and here’s what I can do...” [Be honest! Don’t make promises you cannot keep].