

practice communication exercise

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The point of this exercise is to practice your Constructive Communication skills, using the same structure you already did when you met with your coach. Choose one topic from the Conversation Jumpstarter (CJ) to discuss as a couple, and then engage in three “mini-conversations” based on what you wrote on the corresponding page from “Responding to My Partner’s Answers.”

Important: Be intentional about following the Constructive Communication guidelines every time you speak and listen.

Remember in particular that when it’s your turn to listen, your job is to show that you understand, even if you don’t agree.

If at any point during the exercise you become upset, take a break, then come back and try again. If it’s still difficult, turn your chairs so that you can hear but not see each other. If that still doesn’t help, stop the exercise and wait to discuss it at the next session with your coach.

Make sure you have at least one hour of uninterrupted time for the exercise. Sit in comfortable chairs, facing each other. Choose one person to be the first speaker. Have three mini-conversations as follows:

Mini-conversation 1: What did you like about your partner’s answer?

Talk about one thing you liked at a time. Using constructive communication, one of you takes the role of the speaker; the other listens. Take turns saying what you liked but don’t switch roles until the speaker feels heard and understood.

Mini-conversation 2: What did you have a question about regarding your partner’s answer?

This conversation has the same structure as the first one, with one addition: when the speaker agrees that the listener has understood the question, then the listener becomes the speaker and responds. Again, take turns stating your questions, and always follow the guidelines for both listening and speaking.

Mini-conversation 3: What worried or concerned you about your partner’s answer?

This conversation is similar to the second one. When the speaker agrees that the listener has heard the concern well, the listener may become the speaker and respond. Take turns stating your concerns.

When the three mini-conversations are finished, debrief the experience together. Talk about how it felt to do the exercise, what you learned, and how you would like to apply what you learned to your relationship.