

Intervention: Three Skills of Intimate Conversation

This exercise will help you to make your conversations deeper and more personal.

Instructions: Try opening up an intimate conversation with an open-ended question; that is, a question that has a longer answer than just “yes” or “no.” Examples: “How would you like to ideally change our life together in the coming year so it could be the best year ever?” or “What do you feel is going well for you these days?” or, “What do you feel is not going as well as you’d like?” You can also begin a conversation by simply asking, “How are you doing, baby?” or “How is life treating you? Talk to me. I’m listening.”

After you have started, take a look the skills on the following pages. They are designed to help you explore and talk about your feelings as the conversation proceeds. If your partner asks you something about how you feel but you’re not sure how to put feelings into words, look over the first list below, and say aloud which feelings are true for you. It’s ok to name more than one, since people often experience blends of feelings.

► **Exercise:** **Three Skills of Intimate Conversation**

Skill #1 – Putting Your Feelings Into Words

I feel

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. I feel accepted | 27. I feel critical of you | 54. I'm depressed |
| 2. I know I am liked | 28. I feel uncomfortable | 55. I am surprised |
| 3. I feel understood | 29. I feel affectionate | 56. I feel like arguing |
| 4. I feel rejected | 30. I feel tense | 57. I appreciate you |
| 5. I feel like you dislike me | 31. I feel betrayed | 58. I feel like bragging |
| 6. I feel misunderstood | 32. I feel like you don't even like me | 59. I am anguished |
| 7. I feel appreciated | 33. I feel irritable | 60. I feel like a failure |
| 8. I feel unappreciated | 34. I feel alienated | 61. I am ashamed |
| 9. I feel abandoned | 35. I am angry | 62. I want to assert my rights |
| 10. I feel connected | 36. I am agitated | 63. I feel like an innocent victim |
| 11. I don't feel accepted | 37. I am restless | 64. I feel righteously indignant |
| 12. I feel close to you | 38. I feel alone | 65. I am apprehensive |
| 13. I feel distant from you | 39. I feel lonely | 66. I have a lot of mixed feelings |
| 14. I am afraid | 40. I am upset | 67. I feel shy |
| 15. I feel like hitting something | 41. I am alarmed | 68. I am horny |
| 16. I feel like kicking something | 42. I feel resentful | 69. I feel romantic |
| 17. I am amused | 43. I am astounded | 70. I feel unattractive |
| 18. I want to be belligerent | 44. I'm upset | 71. I am not sure how I feel |
| 19. I feel bashful | 45. I feel awe | 72. I am ambivalent |
| 20. I feel battered | 46. I feel clumsy, awkward | 73. I feel like apologizing |
| 21. I am baffled | 47. I feel belittled | 74. I feel regretful |
| 22. I feel beautiful | 48. I feel insulted | 75. I feel disgusted |
| 23. I feel handsome | 49. I am hungry | 76. I am afraid |
| 24. I feel neglected | 50. I am tired | 77. I am happy |
| 25. I am bitter | 51. I am exhausted | 78. I feel joyful |
| 26. I feel comfortable | 52. I have no energy | |
| | 53. I feel like boasting | |

Skill #2 – Ask Questions During An Intimate Conversation

After a conversation has begun, if you want to explore your partner's feelings and thoughts, one of the best tools you can use is asking questions that open the heart. Here are some examples you can try. Anytime during the conversation, look over the list below and read aloud a question that you'd like to ask your partner.

Questions

1. What are you feeling?
2. What else are you feeling?
3. What are your primary needs here?
4. What do you really wish for?
5. How did this all evolve?
6. Who are the main characters in these feelings you're talking about?
7. What would you really like to say, and to whom?
8. What are the feelings you are afraid to even think about?
9. Do you have any mixed feelings? What are they?
10. What are your choices as you see them?
11. What are the positive and negative aspects of each of your choices?
12. Do you think this has affected our relationship (or another relationship). If so, how?
13. Is there some way you wish you could have done things differently? How so?
14. What are your obligations (or duties) here?
15. Do you have a choice to make?
16. What would you really like to ask of me?
17. What do your values tell you about all this?
18. Think of someone you really admire. What would he or she do and how would he or she view this situation?
19. Does these feelings and needs have any spiritual, moral, ethical, or religious meaning for you?
20. Is there anyone or anything you disapprove of here?
21. Is there anything or anyone you admire here?
22. Is there anything you've learned from this?
23. Who is going to be most affected? How will they be affected? Why?
24. Does this remind you of anything else in your personal history?
25. What meaning does this have for you to bring this up now?
26. How does this affect your identity, your idea of yourself?
27. How does this situation touch you?
28. How does this situation change you?
29. How have you changed or how are you changing now, and how has that affected this situation?
30. How did this all begin, what was the very start?
31. What's your major reaction or complaint here?
32. Who do you think is most at fault?
33. How do you think things would be resolved in the next five years?
34. How do you WISH things would be resolved in the next five years?
35. Pretend that you only had only six more months to live. What would be most important to you then?
36. What are your goals here?
37. How are you thinking about how all of this fits into your life as a whole?
38. What, if anything, makes you angry here?
39. What are the "shoulds"? (Like what should you take responsibility for here?)
40. What is your biggest "turn off" in this situation?
41. Are there parts of yourself that are in conflict?

Skill #2 – (Continued)

While questions are always interesting, sometimes statements that **explore feelings** are also very powerful at making the conversation deeper and more intimate. Here are some exploratory statements you can try. Again, anytime during the conversation, look over the list and read aloud a sentence you'd like to use to go a little deeper into the conversation.

Exploratory Statements

1. Tell me the story of that.
2. I want to know everything you're feeling.
3. Talk to me, I am listening.
4. Nothing is more important to me right now than listening to you.
5. We have lots of time to talk.
6. Tell me your major priorities here.
7. Tell me what you need right now.
8. Tell me what you think your choices are.
9. It's okay not to know what to do, but what's your guess?
10. I think you're being very clear. Go on.
11. Tell me all of your feelings here.
12. Help me understand your feelings a little better. Say more.
13. I think that you have already thought of some solutions. Tell me what they are.
14. Help me understand this situation from your point of view. What are the most important points for you?
15. Tell me what you're most concerned about.
16. Tell me more about how you are seeing this situation.
17. Talk about what the decision is that you think you have to make.
18. If you could change the attitude of one of the key people in this situation, talk about what you would do.

Skill #3 – Express Empathy And Understanding During An Intimate Conversation

To deepen the intimacy of a conversation, it really helps to give understanding and empathy to your partner. First, try to put yourself in your partner's shoes, and understand what they are saying or feeling. Then communicate to your partner that their thoughts or feelings really make sense to you. Below are some great statements you can make that convey understanding and empathy. Look them over and say aloud any that ring true for you, as a follow-up to what your partner has just said.

Empathic Statements

1. You're making total sense.
2. I understand how you feel.
3. You must feel so hopeless.
4. I just feel such despair in you when you talk about this.
5. You're in a tough spot here.
6. I can feel the pain you feel.
7. The world needs to stop when you're in this much pain.
8. I wish you didn't have to go through that.
9. I'm on your side.
10. I wish I could have been with you in that moment.
11. Oh, wow, that sounds terrible.
12. You must feel so helpless.
13. That hurts me to hear that.
14. I support your position.
15. I totally agree with you.
16. You are feeling so trapped!
17. You are making total sense.
18. That sounds like you felt really disgusted!
19. No wonder you're upset.
20. I'd feel the same way you do in your situation.
21. I think you're right.
22. I see. Let me summarize: What you're thinking here is...
23. You are in a lot of pain. I can feel it.
24. It would be great to be free of this.
25. That must have annoyed you.
26. That would make me mad too.
27. That sounds infuriating.
28. That sounds very frustrating.
29. That is very scary.
30. Well I agree with most of what you're saying.
31. I would have been disappointed by that too.
32. That would have hurt my feelings also.
33. That would make me sad too.
34. POOR BABY!
35. Wow! That must have hurt.
36. I understand what you are feeling.
37. I totally understand what you are feeling.
38. Okay, I think I get it. So what you are feeling is...
39. I would have trouble coping with that.
40. What I admire most about what you're doing is...
41. That would make me feel insecure.
42. That sounds a little frightening.
43. Tell me what you see as your choices here.

*Remember, the use of these skills is not just limited to intimate conversations with your partner. Like John's story in the video about the engineer who learned these three skills, we encourage you to use this tool to improve all your conversations with other people. Chances are people will find you friendly, empathetic and very easy to talk to!