

## **SPEAKER/LISTENER EXERCISES**

Prepare for exercise by having a paper and pen nearby to take notes.

For Stage Two exercise come prepared with your own topic

### **Stage One: Simple Mirroring**

**Speaker:** One person speaks about a topic, stays on topic, uses I messages to talk about self for a limited time. (2 minutes works for most couples)

**Listener:** The other person listens carefully, quiets any reactions or responses, (okay to take notes). Reflects back what they hear: "I heard you say" and "did I get that right?"

### **Stage Two: Speaker/Listener - Deeper Listening**

#### **Speaker:**

1. Identifies a topic.
2. Shares feelings about the topic.
3. Stays on topic.
4. Uses I-messages to talk about own feelings and thoughts.
5. Talks about feelings for a longer time.

Avoid tendency to blame your partner. Be open to self-discovery. Keep going deeper into how you feel. This process is about willingness to take a risk to speak. It's okay to be different. Speaks for 15-30 minutes.

#### **Listener:**

1. Listens actively without reacting or fixing
2. Reflects back major points.
3. Responds with a sentence of empathy.
4. Helps partner understand self by asking deepening questions.
5. Avoids talking about self.

Ground yourself, listen carefully and calmly. Help partner go deeper into their feelings by asking deepening questions. Focus on the feelings the speaker shares. Pick one feeling and ask questions. What's that like for you? I'm curious about..., What does that mean to you? Reflect some things back, to show understanding and then check for understanding. Provide a sentence of empathy. Note your reactions silently as they arise while watching for discomfort, wanting to fix it, and criticism. Do your best to put yourself in your partner's shoes. Respond with a sentence of empathy. Accept your own reactions without self-judgement. You don't have to take what's said so personally. Remind yourself your partner is a separate person with their own feelings, thoughts, personality, and family history. "I only need to listen, not fix."