

Communication Boosters: Relationship Improvement Exercise

Huffington Post, Stephanie Michele Posted: 10/23/2013

What do successful people have? Relationships that support their success. How did they get those relationships? They exercised effective communication.

Here is a communication exercise that can significantly improve the quality of your relationships.

Exercise: “Structured Dialog”

What is Structured Dialog? The practice of using mirroring, validation and empathy in a conversation. (From bestselling author [Harville Hendrix](#))

Mirroring -- Repeating back what the other person says and developing a principle of curiosity by asking, "Is there more about that?" "Am I getting everything?" "This is what I heard you say..."

Validation -- Communicating understanding. Look for points you understand and then say, "I understand that." When you don't understand, ask, "I might not be understanding this, can you explain in a different way?"

Empathy -- Discussing feelings pertaining to the dialog's topic. Ask "How do you feel about that?" and be prepared to share how you feel.

What You Need to Know: Structured dialog is something you can do with a co-worker, friend, spouse, family member or someone new you meet. It does not matter how or with whom you start a dialog with. When the practice of structured dialog becomes second nature to you, you can use it to improve all types of relationships. Having one structured dialog a day for three week will significantly improve your

communication and understanding. As communicating and relating becomes easier, you will feel more supported, loved, happy and less stressed.

Keep Your Focus On: Asking questions and carefully listening to the answers.

Tips for Getting Started:

- . Try to have one structured dialog each day that lasts for 15-30 minutes.
- . Have some topics in mind before starting a dialog. Topics that inspire storytelling work great. Examples: Most meaningful childhood moments -- or -- What do you like to do and how did you discover this passion?
- . Use structured dialogs for problem solving conversation.
- . Experiment with your practice. Observe the difference between conversations where you are practicing structured dialog alone and where you have shared the exercise with the person you are talking to so they can practice too.
- . The willingness to be curious is what inspires positive social interaction. Invite people to tell their story and once they do, accept the story with removal of judgment and thank them for it.
- . Learn and practice structured dialoging enough that you can be spontaneous with it.