

Empathic Conversation Practice & The 6 Minute Exercise

Structure for Practicing Empathic Speaking and Listening in Conversation

Empathic Conversation Practice. To experience the deeply nourishing, enriching, supportive, creative and generative, and even healing benefits of practicing this structure with a partner [*see also Elements of Empathy and Four Communication Choices handouts*]:

- Begin by asking each other who wants to go first as Speaker or Listener.
- Speaker takes a turn speaking about what they want to talk about while the Listener listens. You may or may not want to set an amount of time for each turn as Speaker (e.g. 5 minutes each).
- When the Speaker has finished, the Listener can reflect back to the Speaker what they heard the Speaker say, and Speaker clarifies and underscores what is true for them.
- When it's time, switch roles. The Listener becomes the Speaker, and vice versa. Repeat the process.
- At the end of your practice together, you can do a debrief and give supportive feedback if you'd like [*see Partner Practice and Feedback handout*].

6 Minute Exercise with Elements of Empathy. For more structured speaking and listening practice. Before starting, you may want to do some Self-Connection Practice.

1. Presence Practice – 2 minutes

For the first 2 minutes, the Speaker speaks about what they want to talk about, and both Speaker and Listener practice presence with each other.

2. Understanding Practice – 2 minutes

For the next 2 minutes, the Speaker continues to speak and both Speaker and Listener now focus on practicing Understanding, while also continuing to practice Presence. Decide together when the Listener will reflect back understanding of what the Speaker has said. Listener, see if you can allow your words of reflection to flow effortlessly from presence. Speaker clarifies and underscores what is true for you.

3. Needs – 2 minutes

For the next 2 minutes, the Speaker continues to speak and both Speaker and Listener now focus on the needs of the Speaker (and meeting those needs), while also continuing to practice Presence and Understanding. Decide together when the Listener will reflect back the needs of the Speaker, and Speaker clarifies language that best resonates.

4. Debrief and Feedback – 2 minutes

After the 6 minutes, for 2 minutes share how the process of practicing the elements was for each of you. What insights, learnings, questions? [*See Partner Practice and Feedback handout*] Switch roles and repeat steps 1-4.

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