

Developing Recovery Conversations

A recovery conversation is a conversation that you have after a fight or just when you are not getting along. The conversation is an attempt to reestablish connection. Getting across your underlying feelings and having them accepted leads to connection. Not getting across your underlying feelings leads to alienation.

Starting a Recovery Conversation:

**Be Brave – initiating a conversation can be tense and risky.
Realize your positive attempts to start a conversation may be ignored or met with a negative response.
Realize you may have many false starts and detours.**

First Deal with Your Own Emotional Flooding:

**Learn to Self-Soothe - Calm yourself.
Resist the feeling of urgency and disaster thinking that make you want to fight or flee.
Take a Time-Out if you need to - allow your heart rate to come down.
Slow down your speech and the conversation.**

Stay with it:

**Learn to stay with the conversation even though it is painful. If you don't fight or flee, you will probably feel vulnerable. When you can't stay with it, come back later to continue.
Having the attitude of staying with it and working through it will eventually get you there.**

From Blaming to Self-Focus

**Learn to develop a self-focus.
Talk about your own experience, feelings, needs and wants.
Avoid blaming your partner and listing his/her shortcomings.
Let your partner have his/her feelings - don't discount them even if you don't agree.
Take responsibility for your part in the problem.
Admit the things you did or are doing that were hurtful. You have to live with yourself.**

Risk - Share from the heart, share the missing pieces:

By now you and your partner may only see each others anger. You also may only be aware of your anger and not your other underlying feelings. This leaves your conversation with many left-out feelings. Your left-out feelings and your partner's left out feelings form the basis for your recovery conversation. What are the difficult aspects of your experience that you are wanting your partner to understand but are having a hard time saying? What are you leaving out of your conversation? Take risks to begin to share these feelings and realize that they won't be accepted at first.

The Problem is not the Problems:

Improving the relationship is not about agreeing on solutions to problems - it is about accepting each other and protecting your connection. So while you may be talking about a problem - solving it is not the solution. The solution is in how you talk it out. You must reestablish connection before you can solve problems. Don't push for solutions too early.

Find Balance - Promote Acceptance:

**Take Turns. Listen carefully to your partner.
Appreciate your partner's point of view - We all see the world through our own eyes.
During a difficult conversation, tell your partner the positives that you do appreciate.**

Closing Conversations

**Share what you need as you end the conversation.
When things are not finished - you might need a break but don't give up.
When you end a conversation leave the door open – don't slam it shut.
When things don't go well, remember, don't be surprised or disheartened by backsliding.
Backsliding is an inevitable part of making progress.
It is learning to persist in engaging your partner over and over that makes your relationship stronger.**