

Steps to Effective Communication in a Relationship

The primary focus of this worksheet is to resolve conflicts between two or more people.

For this to work, both parties need to adhere to these simple rules of engagement. This can be done in two different ways.

1. If the conflict is between you and your partner or you someone you live with, sit down together and each of you get your own notepad for handwriting notes.

Note: handwriting is the slowest form of communication which is why I suggest it here. It slows the mind down which allows for better clarity.

2. If the conflict is between you and someone you do not live with, you will need to use either email or texting.

Decide who will go first and let that person write down how they are feeling about one topic. You don't want to write an entire letter. Just keep it short and simple. No more than one paragraph. If you are physically in the same room, have the person hand the notepad to the other person. If not, have the person send you the email or text. Before presenting the paragraph to the other person, read through it to make sure each sentence follows the steps below. Continue this process back and forth until the issue is resolved.

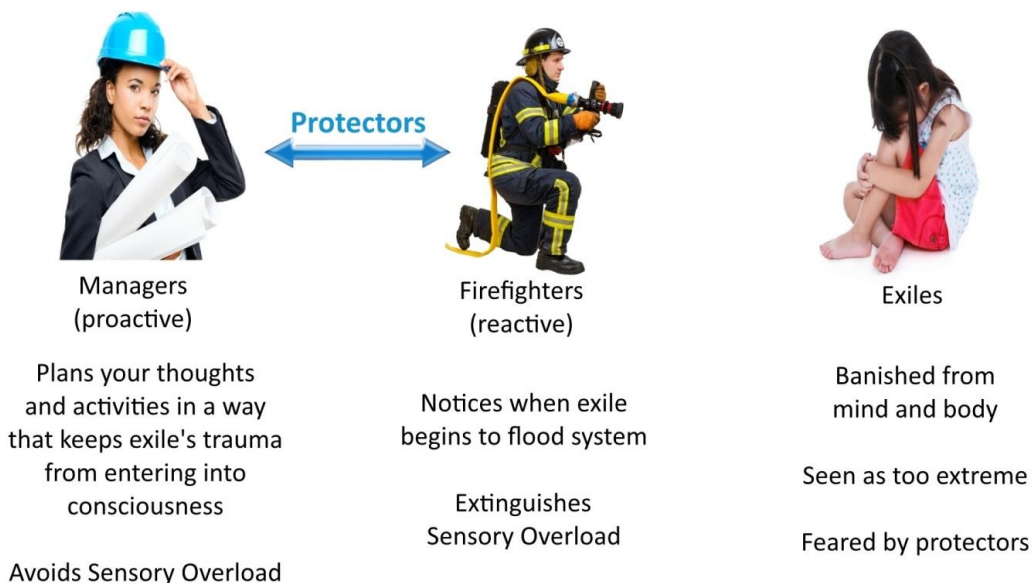
This exercise must be done in complete silence. Unless you have had many hours of practice, you will not be able to do this exercise verbally without getting triggered or triggering the other person.

Reference

We have parts (or states of consciousness) in each of us that are grouped into three categories.

Managers, Firefighters, and Exiles

SELF – This is not a part. This is the one who notices the three parts and is able to feel compassion, curiosity, clarity, creativity, connectedness, courage, calmness, confidence as defined by Internal Family Systems.



STEPS

1. Have both parties write down any boundaries they may want to establish prior to this process. The list should include anything that would be too triggering to discuss at the current moment. Keep in mind that some of the things the other person writes down as a boundary, may be the very thing you wanted to discuss. You will still need to respect their boundaries until they feel comfortable enough to discuss these topics. Before each of you presents the boundaries to the other party, make sure the way the boundaries are written is in line with the steps below.

2. Make sure that none of your sentences appear to Shame or Blame. These are any statements that could make a person feel inadequate, less than, or have to defend. Instead of saying YOU, say I. Example: Instead of "You make me feel like I'm not welcome." say "I would like to feel more welcome into your life."

Also, instead of blaming, make requests. Be very careful that your request does not blame. Example: "Can you be nicer" says that the other person is being mean so there is still a blame statement here. It also conveys a tone that is abrupt. You could speak for your part instead of from your part. Example: A part of me gets scared when it thinks you are speaking in harsh manner. With a little luck, the person may feel some compassion for your part that gets scared rather than thinking that you just said they are mean.

3. Be sure your verbiage does not contain phrases like "You Always" "You Should" "You Never".

4. Be sure your verbiage does not contain phrases that give any type of advice or recommendations.

5. Be sure your verbiage does not contain phrases that make it sound like you are more knowledgeable than the other person.

6. Be sure your verbiage does not contain phrases that compare the other person to yourself or anyone else.

7. Feel compassion for each person including yourself.

8. Appreciate each person's individual strengths.

9. THIS IS THE HARDEST STEP: Be open to what the other person is saying. There may actually be some truth about you or them that is very hard to accept. This is where you or the other person may feel shame or vulnerability for a second quickly followed by a Firefighter who wants to go on the attack to defend the little Exile that got hurt. If your conflict includes different perspectives on how something should be done, be open to the idea that there is more than one way to do it. **The number one factor often used to determine whether or not a relationship will survive, is the ability for both party's willingness to be open.**

10. If anyone starts to get triggered, allow them space in silence so they have time to calm their reactivity. Notice what is happening inside you as they sit in silence.

Be aware that Firefighter parts are often the first ones wanting to react as you read the other person's email or note. It often takes several minutes to get the part to relax enough that you can respond from Self.

Be aware that you are most likely reading an email or note that is written almost entirely by the other person's Manager or Firefighter parts. Parts are either being proactive or reactive as they are composing. They are wanting to be heard, seen, and valued. They are protecting the parts you won't see in the email or note, which are the vulnerable ones who feel shame, guilt, inadequacy, vulnerability, or unwanted. The Exiles are the ones who carry these burdens.