

RECONCILIATION DIALOGUE

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The intention of this dialogue is to provide a structure by which to reconcile and reconnect after the discharge of anger. It is important not to prematurely initiate these dialogues. There must be an adequate “cooling off” period between the expression of anger, and the Reconciliation Dialogue. The exact time period to cool off may vary from individual to individual and couple to couple, but a minimum of 20 minutes is recommended. Twenty minutes is the amount of time many people’s bodies need to dissipate the cortisol, adrenaline, and other “fight or flight” stress hormones that we produce when we are angry.

This is only a sample dialogue, providing a model for what reconciliation requires:

1. **CLEARING:** An ownership of responsibility, and amends or apology.
2. **CONSCIOUSNESS:** An awareness of what got triggered within oneself.
3. **COMMITMENT:** New behavior for the future that will support the relationship.
4. **COMPASSION:** All done with an awareness of your connection, and compassion for the other and for the self.

The dialogue outlined below is the one that the person who expressed anger would initiate. If a person who was on the receiving end of anger (without also expressing anger) wanted to initiate a dialogue, they would also follow the “4 C’s”. They would own their responsibility for whatever they might have done (even if it was unconscious or unintentional) to the partner that triggered the anger; they would own their own defensive response to the anger; they would make a commitment for a different behavior in the future; and do this all in connection and with compassion. In the dialogue script below, at times I offer a variety of phrases to use (for example, a, b, c). Feel free to use these or substitute others as appropriate.

SAMPLE RECONCILIATION DIALOGUE

CLEARING

Partner 1 (P1): I know we had an angry exchange earlier, and I would like to invite you into a dialogue with me so we can reconcile and reconnect. When I am angry, I know neither of us ends up in a good place. I want to hear about your experience, and tell you what I learned about myself, so we can (work through this/process this/put this behind us/etc.) now and find better ways of managing our frustrations in the future.

Partner 2 (P2): I'm available now.

(P1): I appreciate your willingness to be in this dialogue with me. My promise is to be as conscious as I can of accepting responsibility for my part and co-creating a safe place for us to dialogue.

(P2): Thank you for initiating this dialogue. I see it as an "olive branch" for our relationship and will also promise to take responsibility for my part and co-create a safe place for us to dialogue.

(P1): First, I want to hear what it was like for you when I was angry.

(P2): When you were angry, I experienced . . . and I felt . . .

(P1): So, when I was angry, you experienced . . . and felt. . . (mirror until complete, validate and empathize). (*Optional: Is that familiar to you from childhood?*)

(P2): (*Yes, what it reminds me of in childhood is . . .*

(P1): (*So what it reminds you of in childhood is . . . (mirror until complete, validate and empathize).*) I see that I caused you pain, and I am sorry for that. That's not what I want to do, even when I am hurting, frustrated or angry. (*Pause to allow that to be felt by both partners.*) Are you available to hear what I'm now aware of that was going on inside me that triggered my anger?

(P2): Yes, I'm available.

CONSCIOUSNESS

(P1): I'm now aware that just before I got angry, I experienced a deep feeling of being (disregarded/unimportant/accused/guilty/devalued/rejected/powerless/inadequate or unlovable) when . . . (*briefly describe triggering event*).

(P2): So what you're now aware of is . . . (mirror until complete, validate, and empathize). Does that seem familiar from your childhood?

(P1): Yes, what it reminds me of in childhood is . . .

(P2): So what it reminds you of in childhood is . . . (mirror until complete, validate, and empathize).

COMMITMENT

(P1): In the future, I commit to noticing when I'm starting to feel (disregarded/unimportant/accused/guilty/devalued/rejected/powerless/inadequate or unlovable) and take these steps to self-soothe . . . And/or, in the future, it would mean a lot to me if you could change your behavior in this way . . .

(P2): So in the future... (mirror until complete, validate, and empathize).

COMPASSION

(P1): Thank you for having this dialogue with me. One thing I appreciate about you right now is . . .

(P2): You're welcome . . . So one thing you appreciate about me right now is... And one thing I appreciate about you right now is...

(P1): So, one thing you appreciate about me right now is...