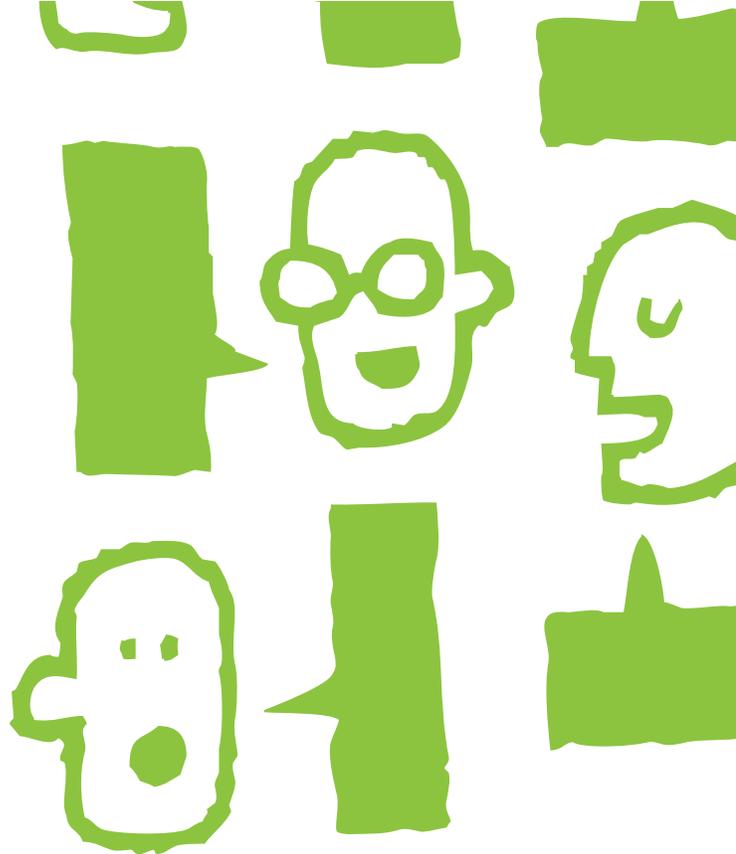


Courageous Conversations



How intimately do you talk with your partner, significant friends, or close colleagues? What's the courage level of your conversations?

Think about the conversations you've had with a partner or close friend during the past few months. Are you satisfied with the quantity and quality of your talking time together? In your opinion do you need:

- More feelings
- More courage in dialogue
- More time to talk
- More real listening to each other
- More acceptance without judging, advice, or little sermonettes

Much of any relationship is defined by how two people talk together. For example, does one person do most of the talking? Does one person try to impose his or her ideas on the other, or is there a spirit of listening, clarifying, and understanding?

In a healthy relationship, it's helpful to check out and talk about feelings and what is behind them. That's courage. Feelings are neither right nor wrong; they simply "are."

It's quite common to block "courageous conversation" with another person by the way we listen. A major challenge in relationships is listening. It's not easy! First, you must be willing to take time. The accelerations of change and busyness seem to leave little energy left for listening. Listening is becoming a lost art when most of us are starving to be "heard." People who take time to listen to each other's words and feelings make a priceless contribution to their relationship.

Being a listener doesn't mean that you have to take responsibility for solving another's problems. You don't need to cure people; you just need to care about them.

Courageous Conversations

Exercise

Directions: Pick one relationship you'd like to deepen or enhance—a person you'd like to more fully unpack with and complete the following exercise. What kind of interaction do you have with each other? Place a check under the answer that fits your perception of your relationship.

The person I have chosen is:

	Always	Usually	Some-times	Rarely	Never
1. I listen to this person.					
2. This person listens to me.					
3. I usually understand what this person is trying to say.					
4. This person usually understands what I am trying to say.					
5. I show an appreciation when this person does things for me.					
6. This person shows an appreciation when I do things for him or her.					
7. I show active interest in this person's ideas, thoughts, feelings, and activities.					
8. This person shows active interest in my ideas, thoughts, feelings, and activities.					
9. I feel OK disagreeing with what this person says or does.					
10. This person feels OK disagreeing with what I say or do.					
11. I reveal feelings.					
12. This person reveals feelings.					
13. I am truly present.					
14. This person is truly present.					
15. I am happy just sharing and spending time with this person.					
16. This person is happy just sharing and spending time with me.					

Fully unpacking your relationship bags—disclosing yourself to others—promotes both health and happiness. We all need someone—at least one other person—with whom we can fully unpack our bags.

How open are you? Use the following questions to help you summarize your willingness to unpack your bags with others.

1

What did this exercise reveal about yourself and the courageous conversations you have been engaged in?

A large rectangular area with a dotted border, intended for writing the answer to question 1.

2

What are you doing in your conversations that is courageous? What are you doing—or not doing—that calls for more courage in your conversations?

A large rectangular area with a dotted border, intended for writing the answer to question 2.

3

What are three things you can do to increase the level of courage in your conversations?

A large rectangular area with a dotted border, intended for writing the answer to question 3.