

COMMUNICATION POINTS

Handout #1

- Start with Self-Compassion (see *Self-Compassion Break* handout)
- Use “I feel” statements ~ in addition to lowering the chances of your partner becoming defensive, it is a way of honoring your own feelings
- Use “and” instead of “but”
- Use the “sandwich” technique ~ precede and follow a difficult comment or request with an appreciative statement
- Try to let the feelings/differences be as they are ~ (This one is hard. Be patient with yourself.)
 - Practice being able to hear your partner say “I’m unhappy,” “I’m lonely,” “I’m pissed,” without feeling obligated to fix the situation or invalidating the other person’s feelings
 - Try repeating back what your partner said, eg., “You feel lonely.”
 - How does it feel to do this?
- See the humanity/vulnerability behind the irritation ~ both yours & your partner’s
- Watch out for “We should” statements

Instead of “We should clean the garage,” try “I’d like to clean up the garage. Would you be willing to work on it together?”
- When saying how you feel about something your partner is doing that bothers you, try to do it without diminishing him or her as a person ~there’s often a lot of vulnerability or pain behind a “dysfunctional” behavior.

Love the person and set boundaries with the behavior.