

Listening partners

You can pick any amount of time you wish, each of you will get the same amount of time. Please set aside at least 20 minutes each for each person.

One of you will be the listener, one of you will be the focus. When it's your turn to listen you only have to listen, yes, that's right! Just give your present, undivided attention to the focus. Listening helps break down isolation which is a key factor in trauma. Isolation is also a factor in creating and maintaining survival mechanisms. Connection with others, especially connection with other humans, is the most effective action we can take to untangle the confusion that our hurt and isolation has heaped on us. And it's a great contradiction to internalized sexism!

When you are the listener try on these techniques:

Think of this as two brains focusing on one brain

Give complete attention to the client

Be curious

Remember that people are fundamentally good; you unwaveringly holding that reality for the focus!

Please avoid:

Thinking about yourself

Talking about yourself

Talking about what the client's words remind you of

Giving advice

Asking for specific details (just let the focus go where she wants to)

It's ok to indicate your attention is on the focus by saying things like "I get that" or "mmmm hmmm." Sometimes it can be good to repeat a phrase the focus says (like if she's saying she's stressed because of x you can say "I hear x is stressing you!") but if that feels complicated, don't do it! The idea here is that you have to say Very Little because our brains are good and just getting attention helps us think better.

It's ok if the focus yawns, cries, shakes, or laughs while you are listening. This indicates that her brain is getting "freed up" so that she can access even more of her creative, natural intelligence.

When you are the focus:

You can use the first few minutes of your time to notice the person who is listening to you

You can use the time to explore the subject of the week

Or you can use the time to go wherever your thoughts and feelings take you

It's ok to cry, laugh, shake, yawn (and it's ok if you don't!)

You can set up additional time for listening if you are so inclined.

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3/2021