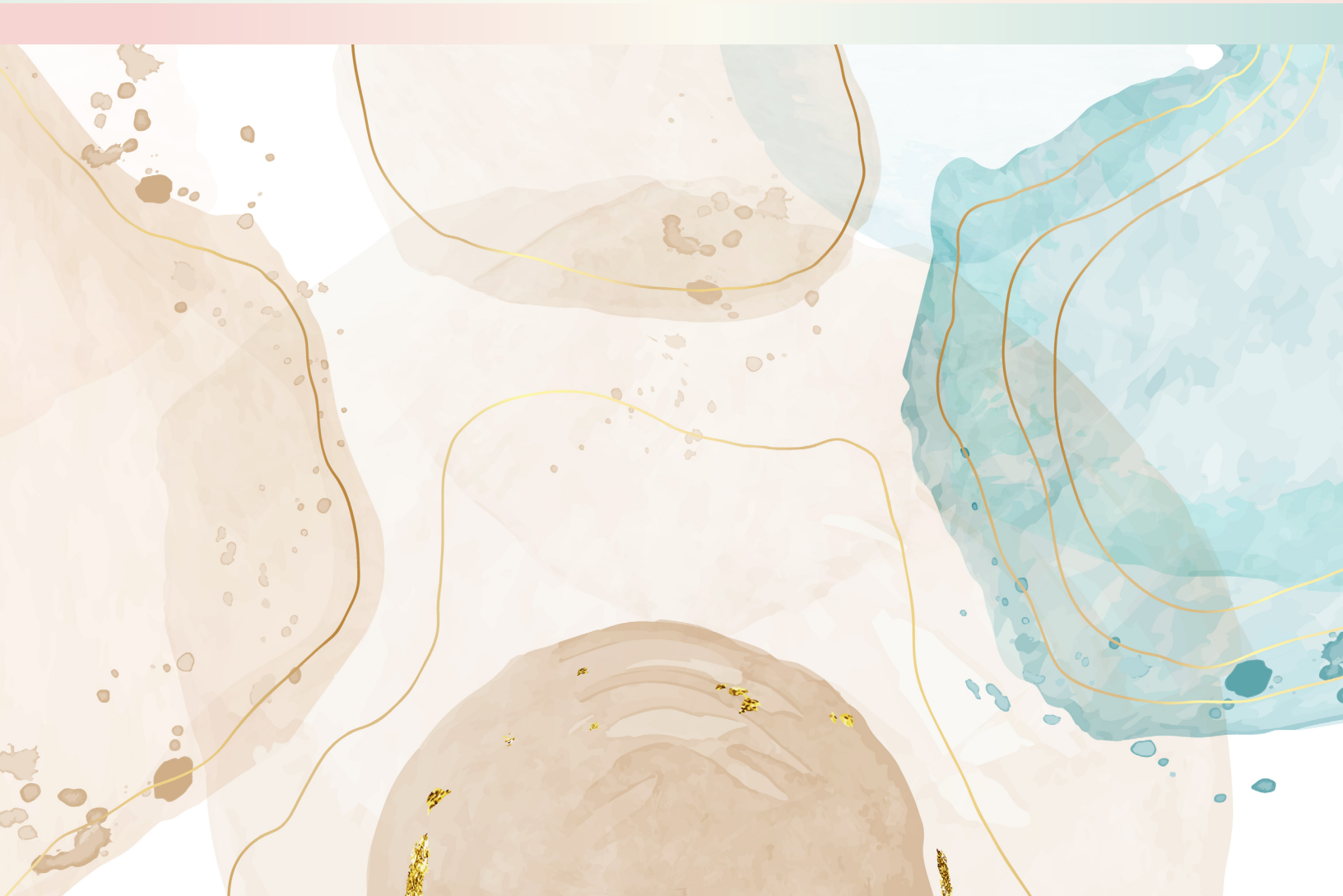




Unlocking Connection

The Ultimate Guide



Unlocking Connection: The Ultimate Guide

Whole
happy
free



We all yearn for positive connections in our interpersonal relationships. The strength or weakness of these relationships have a [direct affect](#) on our physical and mental health, and our ability to thrive. Healthy communication that fosters understanding and empathy is a key factor in supporting a happy, fulfilling relationship, yet so many of us struggle to do it well.

[Timothy Keller](#) said “To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.”

Dr. Harvell Hendrix and his wife Dr. Helen LaKelly Hunt developed the structured [“Imago Dialog.”](#) to support healthy, productive communication and connection. Having a partner that will join you in it is ideal. Nevertheless, even if [you seek first](#) to understand you can create greater understanding and connections in your relationships. Give it a try! Remember anything new may seem uncomfortable but the more you practice the more natural it will become.

Here is an outline based on the Imago Dialog:

CREATE CONNECTION

There is only one speaker and one active listener at a time. This is not a time to discuss what is shared. It is time to seek understanding and connection. You may not agree with what is shared and it may not fit your narrative. Notwithstanding, right now is the time to listen, validate, and empathize with your partner.

1 **Mirror:** *“I hear you saying.....is this correct? Is there more?”*

This is like a parrot. You are not adding your own commentary or perceptions here. You are reflecting back what you hear being said. Continue to reflect what is being said until the person is complete. You can even take notes if it helps you as you listen.

2 Validate: *“It makes sense to me...”*

You do not need to make sense of everything that was shared. Find what makes sense to you in what the other person has shared and be authentic. Even if it isn't how you would think or feel, can you have some understanding that the other person does and even possibly why after hearing them?

3 Empathy: *“I imagine you feel..... is that correct? Is there more?”*

Now is the opportunity to express empathy. Using these words can help you get in touch with it. Always check in with the other person and make adjustments as needed to reflect what they are feeling.

If there is more, continue to reflect that empathy and check in. Example: “I feel you feel....is that correct?”

4 Check in: *“Is there more you need to share with me at this time?”*

If so then go through steps 1-3 again.

5 Finally Question: *“What do you need?”*

Ask the question and listen. Clarify using the above steps IF you need to. Then answer here.

Yes! I can do this. This is what I commit to do and when.

No, I'm sorry. This is not something I am able to do right now. I imagine that is very disappointing to you. I am sorry. Is there something else we could do instead?

Telling a partner, “no” can be difficult. They may be upset. Hold space for their feelings with empathy and understanding and remember that they are responsible for their emotions and you are responsible for yours. In a healthy interdependent relationship each partner takes responsibility for what they think and feel and for their own self care. Check our our blog for more information on this

Next Steps - Switch Places

1 Ask your partner: “*Are you in a place you feel you can now be the listener while I talk and share?*”

- If so, then switch places and you share as the other person now goes through steps 1-5 as the listener.
- If not, ask to set up a date and time to switch places.

Sometimes it is best to take a break and circle back in a few hours, the next day, or even in a few days if needed. Honor the needs of each of you.

- No! If your partner is unwilling or unable to switch places and be the listener, let go for now.

Go to Heavenly Father with the feedback you may have received and seek clarity to know what is your part and what is not. Let the spirit guide you on how you can love and support the other person, and what changes you may need to personally make with the help and guidance of the Savior. Seek to serve only the Living God and not the god of what other people think including yourself.