

Processing failed bids for intimacy and connection: part one – The Bidder

Think of an occasion in the past week when you when you tried to communicate or connect with your partner but felt rejected or in some way unimportant to them:

- What had happened that made you want to communicate? For example: a thought, feeling, or memory; something your partner did; something else you saw or heard
- What did you do to try to communicate with your partner? For example: spoke to them (what did you say?); used touch or other non-verbal communication (what did you do?)
- How did your partner respond? For example: what did they say? What did they do?
- What do you think your partner was thinking or feeling at the time? For example: annoyed or irritated; preoccupied; amused; contemptuous; something else
- What did it mean to you that your partner behaved they way they did? For example: about how your partner feels about you (e.g. they don't care about me); about how you see yourself (e.g. I can never get anything right); about the relationship (e.g. this relationship is failing)
- What events in your past does your partner's behaviour remind you of? For example: at home: with parents, siblings or other family members; at school or with friends; a previous relationship
- What would you have liked your partner to do differently? For example: paid attention to me or listened respectfully; helped me get a sense of perspective or work out a solution to a problem; communicated non-verbally e.g. smiled, touched me or held me; told me they loved me
- If you partner had behaved differently, what would that have meant to you? For example: about how your partner feels about you (e.g. that they respect me); about how you see yourself (e.g. that I'm a worthwhile person); about the relationship (e.g. that we're good together)
- How would you like your partner to think of you? For example: supportive; attractive; funny; considerate; in other ways
- What was your part in this failed bid for connection or intimacy? For example: I chose a bad moment; I was insensitive to my partner's needs; I was defensive; I read too much into my partner's behaviour; my reaction was unhelpful; I didn't own my feelings; I blamed my partner unreasonably
- What would you like to do differently in the future? For example: ask whether now is a good time to talk; state what I want or how I feel more directly; be more subtle or sensitive

Processing failed bids for intimacy and connection: part 2 – The Responder

Now that you have heard your partner's experience, consider how you responded to the failed bid for connection and intimacy. Don't blame your partner or try to justify yourself:

- What were you doing at the time your partner tried to get your attention? For example: relaxing; doing a task or chores; working; something else
- What did you feel at the time: annoyed, irritated or frustrated; contemptuous or disgusted; something else
- What went through your mind? For example: I don't want to be interrupted; I don't feel like talking right now; I'm too tired
- How did you respond? For example: What did you say? What did you do?
- How did your partner respond? For example: What did they say? What did they do?
- What did it mean to you that your partner behaved the way they did? For example: about how your partner feels about you (e.g. they don't care about me); about how you see yourself (e.g. I can never get anything right); about the relationship (e.g. this relationship is failing)
- What events in your past does your partner's behaviour remind you of? For example: at home: with parents, siblings or other family members; at school or with friends; a previous relationship
- What would you have liked your partner to do differently? For example: asked me if it was a good time; accepted that I didn't want to interact right then and left me alone; something else
- If your partner had behaved differently, what would that have meant to you? For example: about how your partner feels about you (e.g. that they respect me); about how you see yourself (e.g. that I'm a worthwhile person); about the relationship (e.g. that we're good together)
- How would you like your partner to think of you? For example: supportive; considerate; attractive; funny; in other ways
- What was your part in this failed bid for connection or intimacy? For example: I was insensitive to my partner's needs; I was defensive; I read too much into my partner's behaviour; my reaction was unhelpful; I didn't own my feelings; I blamed my partner unreasonably
- What would you like to do differently in the future? For example: ask whether it would be OK to talk later at some specified time; state what I want or how I feel more directly; be more subtle or sensitive