



Name Your Five Most Significant Relationships

Significance is determined by:

- Degree to which the other's decisions affect your life
- Amount of time you spend with the other
- Intensity of feeling you have for the other, whether positive, negative or both

These five people should include at least one parent or parental figure:

- Your primary significant other
- The person you have strongest feelings about
- The person you spend the most time with
- The person whose decisions have most powerfully affected your life

Who is the parent or other caregiver in your childhood who had the biggest impact on you, whether positive or negative?

Who is the person in your life now with whom you have the most intimate mutual relationship?

Who is the person who, when you think about them, evokes the strongest feelings in you?

Who do you spend most of your time within the average week?

Who is the person from your past whose decisions have had the most impact on you... how you see yourself, and what you have chosen to do, who you want to be or to not be.

Play and Practice

1. With your partner, pick a brief, unsettling (but not really difficult) incident from your relationship, one from the past two or three weeks, and write down a simple description of what happened as seen by a fly on the wall. Hopefully you can both agree on this description. Now write out in a plain sequence the moves you made in the incident. How did your moves link up with and pull out the moves your partner made? Compare notes and come up with a joint version you can agree on. Keep it simple and descriptive.

2. Add in the feelings you both had and how each of you helped to create this emotional response in your partner. Share your responses and agree on a joint version. Now ask about the deeper, softer feelings that might have been happening there for your partner. Be curious. Being curious gives you valuable information. If your partner has a hard time accessing his or her softer feelings, see if you can guess using your sense of your partner's raw spots as a guide. Confirm or revise with your partner what his or her deeper feelings were.
3. Using the information above, see if you can together describe or write out what you might have said to each other at the end of this incident, if you had been able to stand together and complete it in a way that left you both feeling safe. What would that have been like for you? How would you have felt about each other, your relationship?
4. Try the previous three practice questions with a difficult, unresolved incident. If you get stuck, just acknowledge that a certain part of the exercise is hard for you. If your partner finds the exercise hard, ask if there is any way you can help him or her right at this moment. Sometimes a little comfort is all people need to be able to stay with a task.
5. If you knew that you could take moments of conflict or disconnection and defuse or review them in this way, what impact would this have on your relationship in general? Share this with your partner.