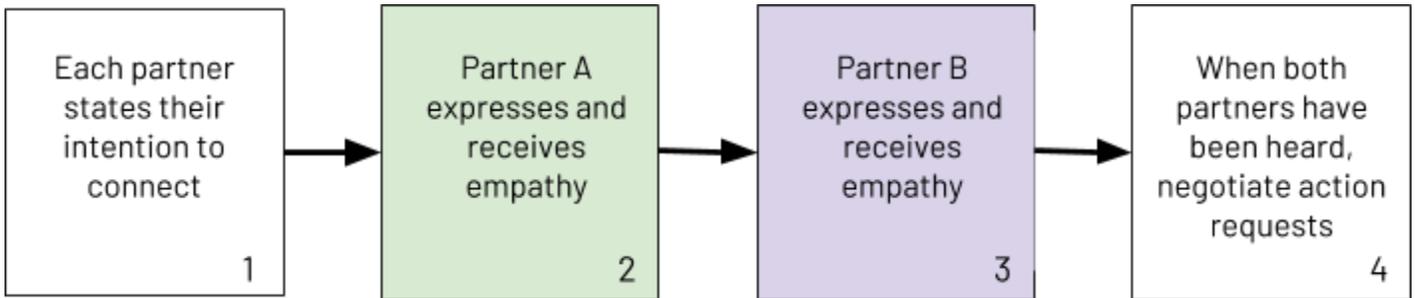


MCD Dialogue Structure

Begin every dialogue by stating your intention to connect. Use this structure all the way through for a single event, don't add in other related events. Mindfully anchor at any point in the dialogue to prevent reactivity from taking over.



1. Each partner states their intention to connect

Partner A: State your intention to connect and offer reassurance.

Partner B: State your intention to connect and offer reassurance.

Examples:

My intention is _____.

For example: *"My intention is to create connection, because I value you and our partnership."*

2. Partner A expresses and receives empathy

Partner A: *"When I observe_____I have a thought that____so I feel_____because I need/value_____. Can you tell me what you heard?"*

- **Express a specific neutral observation** of a single event or one instance of repeated events.
- **Express a Thought*, Feeling, Need, and Request.** Then, make a connecting request -
 - *"Can you tell me what you heard?"*

Take 2 minutes or less. *Only share thoughts if they contribute to connection. Reactive thoughts usually don't.

Partner B:

- **Reflect back** what you heard. Try to use the same exact words that Partner A used. (If you can't keep from sharing your own experience take a timeout and come back later).
- Then, say:
 - *"Did I get it? Is there more?"*

Partner A:

- **Confirm, or, if needed, clarify** and/or reveal another feeling and need, and then making a connecting request -
 - *"Can you tell me what you heard?"*

Take 2 minutes or less.

Partner B:

- **Reflect back** what you heard. Try to use the same exact words that Partner A used.
- Then, say:
 - *"Did I get it?"*

Partner A:

Make a connecting request to shift to hear your partner: *"Can you tell me what feelings and needs are up for you?"*

3. Partner B expresses and receives empathy

Partner B: "When I observe_____I have a thought that____so I feel_____because I need/value_____. Can you tell me what you heard?"

- **Express a specific neutral observation** of a single event or one instance of repeated events.
- **Express a Thought*, Feeling, Need, and Request.** Then, make a connecting request -
 - "Can you tell me what you heard?"

Take 2 minutes or less. *Only share thoughts if they contribute to connection. Reactive thoughts usually don't.

Partner A:

- **Reflect back** what you heard. Try to use the same exact words that Partner B used. (If you can't keep from sharing your own experience take a timeout and come back later).
- Then, say:
 - "Did I get it? Is there more?"

Partner B:

- **Confirm, or, if needed, clarify** and/or reveal another feeling and need, and then making a connecting request -
 - "Can you tell me what you heard?"

Take 2 minutes or less.

Partner A:

- **Reflect back** what you heard. Try to use the same exact words that Partner B used.
- Then, say:
 - "Did I get it?"

4. When each person is heard, negotiate action requests

Action Requests: When both people have expressed that their need for being heard has been met, you know that all needs are "on the table". It's helpful to write each need on an index card and set it in front of you to help you stay focused on needs.

If there is not a sense of connection between you then back up and ask what feelings and needs haven't been heard. Or, often just expressing care and reassurance regarding what's been shared can relax tension and allow a sense of connection.

- When there is a particular quality of connection that includes mutual caring and respect, the process of brainstorming action requests can begin. To open up the door to creativity, it's helpful to throw unlikely ideas, e.g., "We could sell our house and move to a little cabin in the woods and live off the land."
- Action requests are made so that all needs expressed can be met, typically by multiple strategies and at various times.
- Action requests are concrete and doable, as such they include a specific time, duration, place, and action.
- It's helpful to think of action requests as experiments rather than an agreement for the indefinite future
- Given a specific difficult event, it's helpful to ask the question, "What would either of us be willing to do differently in future similar events so that all needs can be met?"

Helpful Hints for successful dialogue

- **Refer to the feelings and needs list while speaking**
- **Speaker speaks 2 minutes or less** at a time before allowing a reflection back
- **Spend more time on universal needs** than any other aspect of experience
- Any **affirmation that you hold the other person's experience as valid** is helpful, e.g., "It makes sense to me that ..." "I get how you would feel that way." "Your feelings and needs are valid."
- **Explicit expressions of care and reassurance contribute to relaxation** of tension and which allows connection. Some examples of expressions of reassurance and care are: "**Your needs matter.**" "I want to do better next time." "**I love you and am sorry about my behavior.**" "I care about you and your feelings." "**I have space to hear your feelings**