

## Guide For Exploring A Dilemma

There may be times when you and your partner find yourselves going over and over the same problem, difference in opinion, or issue, without finding any way of moving forward with it. You may become more and more frustrated with each other. Difficult emotions, tensions and arguments may escalate and leave you both feeling upset, angry and misunderstood because it feels like your partner is just not listening to you.

To help become unstuck from this deadlock it is helpful to: -

- See conflict as an opportunity to learn about each other rather than a situation where only one way or point of view dominates
- Explore your dilemma with a focus on understanding each other's wishes, ideas, feelings, and points of view
- Invite opportunities for listening and discussion
- Focus on communicating what is most important for each of you

*The following process can be helpful, you should attempt this when you have at least 90 minutes of uninterrupted time together: -*

Person A has up to 3 minutes to explain their view of the dilemma. Person B listens without interrupting or making discouraging noises (*such as sighing*), or facial expressions (*such as rolling their eyes*). Person B gives their FULL attention to listening (*rather than having a conversation in their head commenting on what person A is saying*).

Person B then recounts to Person A what they have just heard them say.

Person A listens to Person B until they have finished and then lets them know if there is anything important they have missed out.

Person B takes their turn to explain their view of the dilemma with the same process as above i.e. Person A listening fully and recounting to Person B what they have heard them say.

*Remember that listening to your partner does not mean that you have to agree with them, but it could communicate to them that you are willing to listen to them and want to understand how they feel & what is important to them.*

Both take a few minutes to reflect on what you have heard from your partner, what was useful and interesting to hear, what has helped you to understand what is so important for them, what would be helpful to hear about more. You could write these down.

Take it in turns to share your reflections with each other.

Discuss what have you both found helpful from exploring your dilemma in this way. What have you discovered from listening to each other in this way?. How might what you have heard be helpful in thinking differently about your dilemma?.

CONGRATULATE yourselves for having the courage and motivation for trying to explore your dilemma in this way, this isn't an easy thing to do and can be anxiety provoking when you agree to listen to your partner about a difficult and frustrating issue.