

The Bridge™

Do-It-Yourself Formalized
Communication Technique

Fast Marriage Help
Keeping Couples Therapy Simple!



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Do-It-Yourself Formalized Communication Technique



DIY Counseling
with the
The Bridge™ Communication Technique
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Why seek counseling in the first place?

Nearly all relationship troubles stem from a breakdown in communication and expectations of fulfillment not being met.

Relationships can be difficult, more so when what should have been said a long time ago (or even yesterday) hasn't been said. We let the walls build up in our minds and hearts and finally there is just so much pent up sadness, anger, frustration and confusion that we no longer feel safe saying anything.

When we finally do say something our partner feels sniped at, nagged, criticised and controlled and pushes back. It's a downward spiral; more walls are built, less is said, the weight of pent up thought, feelings and emotions hang heavy.

And so it gets to a point where we need help to carry out any meaningful communication. What we need is structure. This is what a traditional counselor does; providing a structure within which to communicate so both parties feel emotionally safe.

Why DIY counseling?

For all the couples that seek help from a traditional counselor, there are many more that don't. The reasons can include;

- Time - The couple needs to fit their time in with the counselor. This may mean organising a baby-sitter, taking time off of work etc.
- Money - Most counselors in the developed Western world charge \$100+ per hour for their services and this is quite a large barrier for the normal wage earner. If the counseling does not work (and it will take three to 'Tango') then it has largely been a waste of money.
- Fear of counseling in general. Counseling can be a failure from both the counselor's perspective and that of the parties seeking help. The counselor's general style, poor advice, advice not followed, personal agendas or bias towards one party over another, partner resistance and negativity; all of these affect the results. It does not matter whether the fear is real or perceived; if help is not received the outcome will remain the same.

The really great news is that the structure that a traditional counselor offers is now available so you can hold your own highly effective counseling sessions in the comfort and privacy of your own home! I call this extremely powerful tool The Bridge™ and it can be used for a lifetime.

The Bridge™ is a version of a highly successful relating technique that has been used for 40 years in 30+ countries. It has withstood the test of many thousands of hours of use.

Why The Bridge™ really works

Firstly, we have to look at why communication itself works and the answer is;

You are not alive – you are life itself!

When life flows freely living is easy and fun. Pent up mind stuff traps our life energy blocking the flow. The way to free this life energy is to express these blockages that we hold in our minds.

By providing a simple yet finely tuned procedure for communicating, The Bridge™ encourages safe and full expression for both parties. Let life flow!

Meet Them Where They Are At

You need to go and 'meet them where they are at'. Likewise, you want your partner to meet you where you are at. You want to make yourself understood. Your partner wants to be understood. Where you have mutual understanding you have a connection.

You build your side of the bridge out a bit, they build their side of the bridge out and bit by bit – bingo! A completed relationship bridge.

The Bridge™ explained

The Set Up

Imagine a professional counselor's office. It would be free of distractions, phones would be off, a box of tissues would be handy, a glass of water for both participants. This is how you are to set up your own session.

Neither party should have excessive make-up, wear perfume or dress in a way that can influence, manipulate or 'put-off' their partner, just come as you are.

The partners sit and face each other at a comfortable distance (about 30cm apart). They are to be open in their body posture i.e. no crossed arms and legs. Avoid having objects between the partners (e.g. tables, pets, books,). It's just you and your partner. If using a facilitator/moderator/coach they essentially play a passive role and remain to one side (centrally) about a metre away.

Session duration

The first 2 or 3 sessions should last only 40 minutes to 1 hour. Feel free to extend this as both partners become more comfortable.

The roles explained

The instructing / listening partner – In this role, the partner simply delivers the instruction and then listens intently to the response – that’s it. Once the instruction has been delivered it is a silent role. They are not to judge, criticise, defend, provide advice or answer what has been said in any way at any time. In listening, put all of your attention on your partner and do your best to keep any other thoughts like “What are we going to have for dinner?” to a minimum. There will be a tendency to run an internal defensive or judgemental monologue and then ‘reply’ when it’s your turn to communicate. The listening partner is to let whatever is said slide and start their own communicating cycle completely fresh.

The communicating partner - The time and space given to communicate your responses (particularly to question 3) is not a wall to hide behind and throw stones at the instructing partner. The time your partner is giving you is the freedom to express what is within you and is NOT to be used to find fault with and blame your partner. Try to not blame your partner in any way - this is extremely important!

Both partners - Keep arms and legs uncrossed and do not distract your partner.

A facilitator/moderator/coach – For the first 2 or 3 sessions it is preferable but not necessary to have an ‘umpire’ to help keep your sessions on track (it could be a professional counselor, church minister, old uncle, mutual friend). If you are facilitating a session, outside of getting the partners to stick to the rules and watching the clock (if not using a timer) the only other thing you need to do is to put all of your attention on the communicating partner. You don’t need to take notes and definitely avoid giving any sort of advice except some feedback on the accuracy of using the technique. Refer to section ‘Fixing errors in a partner technique’ below.

As a facilitator, this session is not about you and any relationship ideas you may have – professionally trained or not. Save those for another session if you are retained on that basis. Retain an open mind and give The Bridge™ a ‘fair-go’ to prove itself to you before you start making any judgements. This will reduce the inclination to mix in other techniques or to ‘tweak’ the technique or even worse – suggest to a communicating partner what the answers ‘could’ or ‘should’ be!

The Bridge™ is a stand-alone, magnificently refined technique for clearing and is ultimately based on the Socratic Method which essentially allows others to learn by self-generated understanding. When ‘the lights come on’ through one’s own insight, this is a far more powerful and deeply penetrating understanding than being told what they ‘should do’!

All parties – Adhere to complete confidentiality. What is said in a session stays in the session.

Silence

Periods of silence are to be expected as the communicating partner considers their thoughts and feelings and the communication of them. Let this be a comfortable silence. If nothing *genuinely needs to be said just switch turns (if not using a timer). If you have both really run out of things to say in Part A, go to Part B but refrain from doing this until session 3. It would be very rare for a couple not being able to fully utilise at least 2 sessions of Part A.

*A communicating partner may very well be utilising silence as a means of hiding instead of honestly expressing themselves. If it appears one of the parties is hiding, let the 5 minutes and the silence run its course. What's inside them WANTS expression and wants clearing, it's a natural mechanism. The pressure will build and they will invariably end up expressing themselves. As an instructing/listening partner do not break their trust or the sanctity of the technique by pushing them. It is the communicating partner's 5 minutes, their space and they may very well communicate less in an attempt to push back.

Completing a session

At the end of the hour or whenever the session finishes, one of the partners (or the facilitator if using one) should formally close the session with words along the lines of "I declare the session complete". An open, unstructured conversation may take place or maybe you both go on with other tasks. Just a few sessions though will see both partners open up and terrific communication take place without the structure. Often a deep sense of closeness is achieved and a hug is in order!

Fixing errors in a partners technique

In the beginning, don't worry too much about being too rigid and perfect in the technique. The more you do the technique the better you both will get at observing the rules. The most likely error to occur is when the communicating partner blames the listening partner i.e. "When YOU do this I feel that...". This style has become the 'norm' in communication and will crop up from time to time in the technique.

AT ALL TIMES AVOID THE USE OF THE WORD 'YOU'. Phrase your comments about yourself to avoid the need for 'you' e.g. "You don't do enough around the house" is phrased "I feel overburdened with the house-work."

If it happens on the odd occasion just let it slide as most people will know they have 'broken the rules' when it happens. However, if it continues just wait until the 5 minutes is up, pause the timer and explain that he/she was blaming and that blaming is 'out-of-bounds'. If the blaming still continues, the next stage is to gently stop the communication (during the 5 minutes) and point it out. If it gets to this point, the communicating partner will not like their flow of communication stopped and will start to respect the rules more.



Do NOT continue a session if the structure is seriously broken and the rules have gone out of the window i.e. the listening partner scoffs, laughs or a shouting match has broken out, just state that you do not wish to continue at this time but would like to start a fresh session at another time.

No expectations

Engaging in The Bridge™ is a special and effective time spent together but DO NOT expect a specific outcome from it. DO NOT say "Hey, remember in that last session I said I wanted more storage solutions and you haven't done anything towards it!!" Your partner will be less willing to engage in the next session if you do this.

The Bridge™ is not designed as a basis for 'getting something'. It is purely about expression, freeing up all that mind junk which represses the flow of life with-in. Wendy may unexpectedly or with planning get her 'storage solutions' but through the very act of giving a voice to our wants they often evaporate, no longer needing fulfilment or just become less important. In hearing our own words, our wants become more realistic, better prioritised and more quickly and easily achieved.

The unexpected

As with any deep communication, the communicating partner may get emotional with crying, anger, fear, unexpected laughter or a crisis may even occur. The listening partner or facilitator is not to try and stop or promote emotions nor 'play into' or feel guilt over what's being expressed. Be equanimous. Don't play God by thinking you know what's right for your partner. Both partners are to keep breathing deeply and stay with the rules of the technique and with further expression the emotion/crisis will pass. Emotions and even crisis are OK and are a natural clearing process. Be brave and be courageous for each other and yourself. You are up to the task!

Being open

The success of any communication in any context (at work, chatting with your mates or in counseling) depends on the extent to which the communicating partner is effective in getting the message out and the extent that the receiving partner is getting the message in. For both the in and out to work correctly it requires an openness. In your sessions, the openness will probably be fairly shallow at first but will naturally deepen over time. Don't force it and don't rush it as the technique, if sincerely adhered to, draws both parties deeper. All you need is the right intent from both partners and the deepening will sort itself out.

Given that understanding is a key component of this technique remember this important point. If, as a listening partner, you have 'vagued out' with your own internal mind dialogue (and it will happen) and you have not heard what the communicating partner has said, as soon as you realise this has happened, have the guts to admit to it and ask your partner to repeat what you missed. "Hang on a moment, I'm sorry but I vagued out there, can you please say that bit again?" Your partner will appreciate your honesty and effort in trying to understand them and this will increase the depth of communication.

Tips for success

Strategies to engage an unwilling partner

Ok, so you are all primed and ready to go for a formalized communication session using The Bridge™. But there's a hitch to your cunning plan! Given that you've probably been at logger heads on many other issues there is a good chance that your partner may reject your idea to 'sit down and talk'. Here are some suggestions on how to engage an unwilling partner. Use your discretion on which may work...

- 1 Firstly, whatever happens, take a long term approach. Simply expect or anticipate that you will get some "No's" and you won't be disappointed if the idea gets rejected.
- 2 Where possible, remove the notion of this being 'your' idea or something 'you want'.
- 3 Try this sentence... "I've downloaded something off the Internet that says it can help get our relationship back on track. It looks really good and it's a lot cheaper and more convenient than going to see a counselor! Can we give it a go tonight?" (Expect a "no" on tonight and then let your partner feel empowered by giving them the option of the time and date).
- 4 If that hasn't worked, give it a week before trying again and let your partner know that "we need to do something". Give them options. Start with the options you think they will be adverse to (most expensive and inconvenient) and end up with the cheapest and easiest and the answer you want to hear (doing The Bridge™ at home).
- 5 Print off The Bridge™ (except for this page! :-)) and leave it out lying around for your partner to 'find'.

Engaging a moderator

The Bridge™ really tips the scales of power in your favour when compared to traditional counseling. This is all about you and your partner and taking the most direct route to relationship success.

With this formalised communication technique you are no longer dependant on somebody else's time, skills, knowledge or experience.

BUT if you do need a third party to help you stick to the rules (it also helps to engage a moderator just to hold you to an organized session time), expect that the moderator is not just unbiased towards the partners but also doesn't complicate the technique in any way. You'll potentially have three issues and the first two are pretty much identical. The first being that the third party (if a professional counselor) may be simply used to controlling a session their way (heck, It's my practise and after all I AM the trained professional here and I've been doing it for 10 years!). The second comes from both your professional and non-professional help with the idea that "they have asked for my help therefore I'm entitled to give my opinion/ideas/advice". The third potential issue is the out and out sheer simplicity of the technique (this is too simple – let's make it more interesting! I know what we can do... Let's try this...).

Do NOT allow your moderator to modify or add to this tried and tested technique.

So it's up to you to be firm - make sure your chosen moderator/facilitator has read and understood this document and is willing to abide by it. If not, find someone who will.



Immediately schedule some time with your partner to do a session and when that one is finished schedule the next one. Both parties intention to resolve the blocks in the relationship and putting it into action with The Bridge™ is all that is required. Be persistent, be open, be willing to go deeper, no blaming, no judging and breathe steadily and deeply and your relationship will soar to new heights.

With this technique, as long as all parties stay within the rules you can't go wrong.

<http://fastmarriagehelp.com/the-bridge-testimonials>