

Relationship (Re)Programming

© Reflect, Validate, & Explore (RVE)

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One of the biggest sources of conflict in our relationships is when one or both partners do not feel seen, heard, and understood. RVE is a communication tool that gives you three effective steps to ensure your partner feels acknowledged and validated when they are sharing their emotions and experiences.

1. **Reflect:** Gently state back (in your own words) what you heard them express. Ask if you understood them correctly. If they express that you are not understanding them correctly, ask for further clarification.

Reflection might sound like:

- “I am hearing you say that you don’t feel I am making you a priority right now. Is that correct?”
- “It sounds like you are feeling disconnected from me. Does that feel accurate to you?”
- “If I am understanding correctly, it seems that you get overwhelmed by how much I reach out to you when we aren’t in the same place?”
- “Please correct me if I’m wrong, but it sounds like you are feeling frustrated by how busy I have been lately?”
- “Thank you for sharing. I am hearing you say that you are desiring more alone time to engage in your own hobbies and interests?”

2. **Validate:** Demonstrate empathy and understanding for your partner's experience & emotions (keep in mind, you don’t have to feel the same about the situation in order for their emotions to still be valid). Do your best to view the situation solely from their perspective in this moment.

Validation might sound like:

- “I know that wasn’t easy to talk about. Thank you for sharing.”
- “I see that this situation is hurting you.”
- “I can understand why you are struggling with this.”
- “I hear that you are feeling worried about this situation.”
- “It makes complete sense why you are feeling that way.”

3. **Explore:** Ask follow-up questions to better understand their experience. Most importantly, ask them what they need/want from you to best feel seen, safe, & supported.

Exploration might sound like:

- “How can I best support you?”
- “Can you share with me more about your thoughts on this?”
- “What can we do to repair this?”
- “What do you need from me to feel safe right now?”
- “What can I do to help with the situation?”
- “Do you want to talk through this or would you prefer to take some space?”

Practice:

Your partner informed you that they are upset that you keep coming home late from work:

Reflect: _____

Validate: _____

Explore: _____

Your partner expressed that they are feeling disconnected and would like more intimacy:

Reflect: _____

Validate: _____

Explore: _____

Your partner shared with you that it is bothering them how much time you spend on your phone:

Reflect: _____

Validate: _____

Explore: _____

Your partner asserts that they believe they do way more around the house than you do; they express they don't feel the household responsibilities are shared or equal:

Reflect: _____

Validate: _____

Explore: _____

RVE image to print & post in places that will help you remember OR screenshot it and pull it up as needed!

COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO HELP YOUR PARTNER FEEL SEEN & HEARD:

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Reflect: Gently state back (in your own words) what you heard them express. Ask if you understood them correctly. If you did not... ask for further clarification.

Validate: Demonstrate empathy and understanding for your partner's experience & emotions (even if you feel differently about it). Try to put yourself in their shoes.

Explore: Ask follow-up questions to better understand their experience. Most importantly, ask them what they need/want from you to best feel seen, safe, & supported.

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