

## COMMUNICATION FORMAT

(Based on the Communication Model, p. 15 *Restoring the Pleasure* 2016)  
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For all communication exercises, look into each other's eyes to increase the brain chemical oxytocin, which builds trust and attachment; actively listen and share honestly and openly with no sense of judgment. There are no right or wrong answers, only your responses. The communication forms are designed to stimulate your individual thinking and your communication with each other. Do not limit yourselves to the exact response requested.

### STEP 1

- A. Complete each communication form individually, taking time to reflect and listen to your real feelings.
- B. To determine what you think, feel, or need, write whatever comes to your mind in response to the statement or question on the form.
- C. Read your responses out loud to yourself first. Then choose carefully and write the words you want to use to communicate most clearly to your spouse. Share these responses with your spouse.

### STEP 2

- A. While the first spouse is sharing his or her responses, your task is to put aside your thoughts and feelings about what your spouse is sharing and about your own response to the same statement or question.
- B. To increase your listening ability, position your body so that you are facing your spouse. You may want to hold hands, but *only if* that is not distracting for either of you. Look at your spouse. Watch his or her expressions, feelings, and body language, and listen carefully to his or her words.
- C. Put into words what you heard your spouse say and what you sensed he or she was feeling. You might try several different words to reflect your sense of what was communicated. Avoid labels, evaluations, or judgments.

### STEP 3

- A. The spouse who shared needs to listen carefully to the reflection of that sharing. Position yourself so you have eye contact as your spouse tries to empathize with you.
- B. Either affirm that you communicated accurately and were heard correctly, or clarify, rephrase, or add to your first message. If your words and gesture did not communicate the first time, try new ones.

Communication is complete when the message receiver has been able to put the message sender's words and feelings into the receiver's own words *and* the message sender has recognized the accuracy of the feedback. When you are both clear that this process has been completed, reverse roles: the message sender will now be the receiver, and the message receiver will be the sender. Repeat steps 1, 2, and 3.