



**Step 6:** This step involves staying engaged and listening to your partner's disclosures. Your partner may share feelings that take you by surprise. You may feel disoriented or even hurt that you have not heard your partner share so personally like this before. It is OK to experience a mixture of emotions. Start by trying to understand at an emotional level what your partner is saying, without needing to change his/her experience or take responsibility for it yourself. Stay open to the possibility of experiencing and understanding your partner in a new way. Allow yourself to be moved by your partner's new disclosures.

**Step 7:** Explore what helps you feel deeply connected, what is most important for you in this relationship. In this stage of therapy your therapist helps you find ways to ask for your needs in the relationship in a way that is both caring and direct. You can lean into and reach for your partner and he/she is able to reach back in a loving way. You have found a new way to relate when one of you feels stressed, hurt or insecure. The bond between you shifts, becoming closer and more intimate. You can check out your perceptions and talk about feelings. You can listen with an open heart, be curious about one another and offer reassurance when needed. Both of you have a felt sense of "being there" for each other.

### **Stage 3 – Use New Communication Patterns to Solve Problems and Maintain Intimacy**

**Step 8:** Revisit old problems or decisions that have been put on hold (e.g., parenting, finances, sex, family issues, health concerns, etc.) while staying emotionally connected. They don't seem as loaded now that you feel heard, valued, close and secure. Focus on staying accessible, responsive, and engaged while talking about practical issues. Together, you can face any of life's challenges more easily.

**Step 9:** Congratulations! You have reshaped your relationship. Or perhaps this is the first time in your relationship that you have felt a profound bond with one another. You have worked hard to get here, so it's important to celebrate it and put safeguards in place to protect it. Create rituals together that privilege your relationship. Find ways of keeping this new way of relating strong.