

Compassionate Path for Rebuilding Trust in Cases of Relational Betrayal or Other Relational Injury

by Paul J. Scoglio

The following information and the “script” are guidelines for relational repair and building trust following an incident of emotional betrayal or serious injury to a relationship. It is to be use when the injured party (partner, spouse, child or friend) mentions or questions something related to the incident of betrayal or injury. For the process to be successful it is assumed that you will manage yourself well and demonstrate reflective listening skills (Level Two*). If at any time you drop out of reflective listening (into Level One*), then you will have lost any healing momentum in the conversation. Staying with the injured party’s agenda for minutes can save years of relational grief for both parties.

1. **Reflective listening, the first part of Level Two listening:** Repeat what the injured party has said. For example, “So you are thinking about the incident that happened five months ago and you are wondering if the hang-up phone call the night before you felt betrayed, had anything to do with it. Have I got that right?”

The injured party will acknowledge that you have heard the concern correctly or will qualify and restate his/her concern. **Repeat this step until you are told that you have heard it correctly.**

2. **Summary of understanding, the second part of Level Two listening:** After repeating what was said as close to verbatim as possible then clarify your understanding by summarizing. For example, “So what you mean is...?”
3. **Curiosity, the third part of Level Two listening:** Ask questions if you do not understand something completely. Ask, “When you say “. . .” you mean what?” Or simply ask, “Is there more you want to tell me about this?”
4. **Statements of recommitment and intention:** Once you have successfully acknowledged that you have heard about the injury and pain (It is always about pain or it would not be mentioned.) then it is time to make statements that affirm your recommitment and intention to act differently from this time forward.

The Script:

- A. You say, “I love you.” (If there was a question asked then you also answer the question as best you can.)
- B. Next you say, “I am sorry that happened.”
- C. Then you say, “I wish that never happened.”
- D. And you say, “I would never want that to happen again.” Or you say, “I would never want to put you through that again.”
- E. Then again you say, “I love you.”

These statements along with your listening at Level Two are the ingredients for healing when trust is lost in a relationship.

5. **Openness to continuing the discussion:** Return to listening at Level Two: You ask, “Is there anything else you want to say about that?”

Integrity: If there is more to be said about the incident then it is important go back to **item 1** and start through the list of five steps again. Keep repeating this process until the subject or subjects are all talked out. Your partner will welcome the script even if it is read it from this

page. This is a healing process. This is a script for communicating love and demonstrating the capacity to build trust and witness healing in another. The only way this will work is if all of these statements are true for you. If you feel you have to lie in this process then **do not** initiate this process. It will be extremely destructive and function as relationship **poison** rather than healing medicine.

Why use this exercise? Living in the past restricts living in the present. It only makes sense to revisit past injuries within the process of healing. Healing allows you to leave the past behind. The healing process requires a safe time and place to process and move beyond hurts, fears, anger and resentment. By using this script you will create the safe time and safe place necessary for healing.

Perspective: For some it may appear that a partner revisits the past out of vengeance. This is a mistaken perception. The fact is they are compelled to do so, in search of healing and freedom from the pain of past injury. Seeing this process differently requires a perspective change on the part of the person who acted in a way that created the injury.

*** Listening levels are discussed and level two listening is practiced in relationship coaching sessions.**

Level One is all about you. No matter what you hear, you think about the words in terms of yourself and this is not helpful.

Level Two is all about the other person. No matter what they say, you stay focused on them, focused on the meaning for them, of the words they speak. It requires being focused and curious on the feelings and experiences being heard.

Learning to listen at Level 2 is like learning to ride a bicycle. It takes coaching and practice. The Coaches Training Institute in San Rafael, California developed the Three Levels of Listening. As a result many coaches now teach these fundamentals for living, working and communicating well.

Summary Script

1. *Reflective listening, Level Two listening*
2. *Summary of understanding*
3. *Curiosity*
4. *Statements of recommitment and intention*
 - A. *Say, "I love you." And answer the question if any.*
 - B. *Next say, "I am sorry that happened."*
 - C. *Then say, "I wish that never happened."*
 - D. *And say, "I would never want that to happen again."
or "I would never want to put you through that again."*
 - E. *Then again say, "I love you."*
5. *Stay open to continuing the discussion.*

Paul J. Scoglio 978-921-8400