



# THE STRESS-REDUCING CONVERSATION

## INSTRUCTIONS:

The purpose of this process is to assist couples in the management of daily external stress that comes from OUTSIDE the relationship, like job stress.

In this exercise you will discuss a recent or upcoming stress in each of your lives like and upcoming job deadline, or a future event (outside of your relationship) that may prove stressful. Each of you will have turns as a speaker (about your own stress) while your partner listens.

The motto, "Understanding First, then Advice," means that emotional connection should be honored before moving to problem-solving. Empathy with emotions and problem solving are like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle: they fit together, and each is invaluable.

**SPEAKER:** Talk about your stress with as much detail and depth as possible.

**LISTENER:** Offer support to your partner using the methods listed below. Be sure to avoid problem solving unless your partner wants your help doing so. Just do your best to listen and understand your partner's thoughts and feelings. **REMEMBER: Understanding First, Then Advice**

## GIVING SUPPORT MEANS

### 1 SHOW GENUINE INTEREST

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Maintain eye contact.  
Ask questions.

### 2 BE AN ALLY FOR YOUR PARTNER

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Show empathy.

### 3 COMMUNICATE UNDERSTANDING

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What a bummer!  
I'd be stressed out too.

### 4 'WE' AGAINST 'OTHERS'

DON'T SIDE WITH THE 'OTHER'

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Even if you agree with the enemy, empathize with your partner's emotions. Focus on what your partner is feeling, not what your partner is perceiving.

### 5 SOLIDARITY

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This is our problem and we'll face it together.

### 6 PROVIDE AFFECTION AND COMFORT

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Come here and let me hold you. I am totally on your side.