

Heart Talk: ICU

Steps for Heart Talk: ICU

1. Either spouse can initiate “Heart Talk” at any time that either or both of them are experiencing strong emotions (positive or negative). The initiating question could be as simple as, “would you be willing to do ‘heart talk’ on this topic”.
2. Commit to creating a relational ICU (Intensive *Care* Unit).
3. Determine who will begin as the speaker (remember you will soon switch)
4. The communication continues until the speaker feels understood, not when the listener thinks s/he understands.
5. Switch roles once the initial speaker feels complete on that topic.

Speaker		Listener
Get in touch with your emotion.	Identify	Focus on your spouse’s feelings.
Ask for time and give your heart a voice.	Care	Allow your heart to be impacted by their emotion.
Express your emotion directly; “When _____ happens, I feel _____”.	Understand	Summarize and validate what they felt.

Helpful Tips:

1. Ask for time (Ask permission to share your feelings or hear your spouse’s)
2. Share in “bite-sized” chunks
3. Remember emotional information is valuable, private and worthy of honor, respect and care.
4. Understand that caring for your feelings is **not** making your feelings more important than your spouse’s, getting your spouse to change or demanding your spouse admit guilt or apologize.
5. Understand that caring for your spouse is **not** agreeing, being responsible for their feelings or trying to “fix-it”, making changes, admitting guilt or apologizing.
6. As a listener, you can make a validating and caring statement before switching roles (e.g. “thanks for sharing your feelings” or “that makes sense” or “you and your feelings really matter to me).