

Mirroring

by Tim Isbell (last revised 2/26/2023)

I learned about mirroring first from *Getting the Love You Want* by Harville Hendricks. Here's a [link to his mirroring exercise](#). It's a great communication tool.

Mirroring requires 45-60 minutes of practice to grasp it well enough to use in everyday conversations. It's handy when things start escalating or shutting down. It is also useful when someone tends to talk a lot more than another who wishes the other was a better listener.

1. Choose one person as the sender and the other as the receiver. The sender's role is to communicate a simple, neutral statement that begins with the word "I" and goes on to describe a thought, a feeling, or a fact. For example, "I woke up this morning and felt anxious about going to work."
2. Depending on the sender's message, the receiver might ask, "Can you say that more concisely?" (Or, "Please tell me more?" Or "Can you say this in another way?") When the receiver thinks they've understood the message well enough, they paraphrase it to the sender, "This morning you woke up feeling you would rather stay home than go to work. Did I understand what you said and felt?" Other examples might follow one of the forms below.
 - You feel _____ because _____.
 - You think _____ because _____.
 - You are saying _____.
3. The sender responds by saying, "Yes, you have it," or by making a clarifying statement such as, "Not exactly, <then tries to say it more clearly>." This process continues back and forth until the sender says, "Yes, you have it."
4. Switch roles and communicate another simple statement.
5. Repeat the process several times. It feels mechanical at first, but it becomes natural with practice.

Video teaching and examples:

- [AWS Active listening for couples](#) (a teaching, 3:20)
- [Mix - Example of Active Listening](#) (an example, 1:44)
- [Coach to Lead](#) (an example, 4:11)
- [Strength at home, couples role play active listening](#) (an example, 8:52)

(For more relationship resources, see [Premarriage Counseling](#) and [Advice for Couples](#).)