

The Visit:

Crossing the Bridge for a Visit with our Partner/Friend (Order from Hedy Schliefer and words from Harville Hendrix)

Purpose:

- To re-connect and/or deepen our connection with our partner/friend.
- To alert our partner/friend that we have something important to say and that we need their complete attention.
- To gain clarity on a subject that is important to us, either within or outside the relationship with our partner/friend.

1) Invitation:

One partner/friend (the Host) invites the other (the Visitor) for a visit to one of the 'neighborhoods/themes' in his/her/their world...

Host I would like to invite you to cross the bridge for a visit into my world. There is something important I would like to talk to you about. Is now a good time?

Visitor Yes (if this is a good time. If not, arrange for an appointment at a mutually satisfactory time, preferably soon.)

2) Presencing:

At the appointed time, sit across from each other if you can, as close as you can, leaning forward so that your faces are approximately 18 inches (44cm) from each other, arms unfolded, and open, touching hands (if possible and OK for you both and if you are in the same room). Establish eye contact.

Keep breathing regularly, maintaining eye contact*, and continue sitting quietly until both of you feel that the internal conversations inside your head have become silent, and you are both in "present time" and "in the here and now".

3) Crossing the Bridge:

Host (Prepare yourself to welcome your partner/friend with an open heart and open mind. Open the doors to your heart wide.)

Visitor (Imagine yourself "crossing the bridge: to the world of your partner/friend", slowly and deliberately.) When you feel you have arrived, say...
I am here and I'm listening.

*Maintaining eye contact throughout the visit is essential.

4) Listening:

Host I would like to talk about...

(Talk in short sentences, 2-3 at a time, and pause. This means it's easier for the visitor to take it in, but equally it means that the host can share what is really important.)

Visitor (Signal if you feel flooded by the length of your partner's message by gently raising your hand and ask for a moment to slow down and/or for a repeat of the words. When the Host pauses, wait 2-3 seconds, then repeat what you heard by saying...)

I hear you say... Am I with you?

Host (If the Visitor was with you completely, you answer with a big resounding...)

YES.

(If not say...)

You got so much (or a lot- we always celebrate what they "got" as it can be quite hard to be a visitor) and what I would also like you to hear is... (Repeat what the Visitor missed that is important to you.)

Visitor (Repeat what you heard by saying...)

What you would also like me to hear is...

Am I with you?

(If the Host says "yes", continue by saying...)

Tell me more... / Is there more about that?

(Continue with 'tell me more' until your partner/friend says that there is no more about that for now).

5) Essentialising

Visitor So let me see if I've got you completely.
(Summarize the key parts of what your partner/friend has said. Then ask...)

Am I with you completely?

Host (Repeat anything the Visitor missed that is very important to you.)

Visitor (Continue until your partner/friend says that you got him/her/them completely.)

6) Understanding and Taking Ownership/Validating

Visitor I now understand what you're saying and you make so much sense to me because...
(Give a couple of reasons why it makes sense. "Own" your contribution to what your partner/friend said, because that is how significant re-connection takes place.)

(If it does not make sense to you say...)
Tell me more... Help me understand.

(Repeat the process until it makes sense to you.)

This is not about whether or not you agree – only that it makes sense to you from your partner's/friend's perspective, through your partner's/friend's eyes, as if you've stepped into your partner's/friend's shoes.

7) Empathising

Visitor I can imagine the way you might have felt before my visit is...
(Mention two or more feelings. A feeling is described by one word.)

And the way you may be feeling now is...
(Mention two or more feelings like understood, heard.)

Host (Acknowledge those feelings that are on the mark by saying...)
Yes, I do feel... and...

(Add any additional feelings by saying...)
And I also feel...

Visitor (Recap ALL the feelings by saying...)
I heard you say that you are feeling... and... and...

(Pause, then say...)
Is there more about that (about this subject)?

(If there is, repeat the process.)

8) Mutual Appreciation

A good way to end the visit is for both parties to appreciate each other for something they said or did during the visit and for the partner/friend to repeat back the appreciation.

9) Qualities of the Space

Report of the quality of the relational space by saying a few descriptive words about it. (For example, warm, clear, inviting, connecting...)

10) Thank you

Thank each other for the visit.

NOTE: A “return visit” is not request at the end of the visit – it is optional. We suggest “time out” at the end of the visit to digest the experience and avoid a “tit-for-tat” situation. Ask yourself the question: “Is my need for a return visit in my interest or in the interest of connecting more with my partner/friend?”