

Relationship Journal\*

<p><b>Step 1 – S/he said:</b> Write down <b>exactly</b> what the other person said. Be brief:</p> <p>Mom said: She hates me. Do you know what it's like to live with someone who hates you?</p>	<p><b>Step 2 – I said:</b> Write down <b>exactly</b> what you said next. Be brief:</p> <p>Mom, I don't think she hates you, but I do think--and I share this feeling--that she hates what you believe in, who you voted for, and what it means for our country. And I know that you feel exactly the same way about (my sister) and I and what we believe in. And we'll never convince each other, so there's no point.</p>
<p>What are the emotions <b>S/HE</b> might have been feeling?</p>	<p>What are the emotions <b>YOU</b> were feeling?</p>
<p><b>Sad, blue, depressed, down, unhappy</b></p>	<p>Sad, blue, <b>depressed</b>, down, unhappy</p>
<p><b>Anxious, worried, panicky, nervous, frightened</b></p>	<p>Anxious, worried, panicky, nervous, frightened</p>
<p>Guilty, remorseful, bad, <b>ashamed</b></p>	<p><b>Guilty</b>, remorseful, bad, <b>ashamed</b></p>
<p><b>Inferior, worthless, inadequate, defective, incompetent</b></p>	<p>Inferior, worthless, inadequate, <b>defective, incompetent</b></p>
<p><b>Lonely, unloved, unwanted, rejected, alone, abandoned</b></p>	<p>Lonely, unloved, unwanted, rejected, alone, abandoned</p>
<p><b>Embarrassed</b>, foolish, <b>humiliated</b>, self-conscious</p>	<p>Embarrassed, foolish, <b>humiliated</b>, self-conscious</p>
<p><b>Hopeless, discouraged, pessimistic, despairing</b></p>	<p><b>Hopeless, discouraged, pessimistic, despairing</b></p>
<p><b>Frustrated, stuck, thwarted, defeated</b></p>	<p><b>Frustrated, stuck, thwarted, defeated</b></p>
<p><b>Angry, mad, resentful</b>, annoyed, irritated, <b>upset, furious</b></p>	<p>Angry, mad, <b>resentful</b>, annoyed, irritated, <b>upset, furious</b></p>
<p>Other (specify)</p>	<p>Other (specify)</p>

**Step 3 – Good Vs. Bad Communication:** Was your response an example of good or bad communication? Use the EAR Checklist to analyze what you wrote down in Step 2.

**E.A.R. Checklist\***

	Good Communication	✓	Bad Communication	✓
E = Empathy	1. You acknowledge the other person's feelings and find some truth in what s/he said.		1. You ignore the other person's feelings or argue and insist s/he is "wrong."	✓
A = Assertiveness	2. You express your feelings openly and directly.		2. You fail to express your feelings or express them aggressively.	✓
R = Respect	3. Your attitude is respectful and caring.		3. Your attitude is not respectful or caring.	✓

**Step 4 – Consequences:** Did your response in Step 2 make the problem better or worse? Why?

On the Podcast, David and Fabrice point out that Eileen did not acknowledge any of her mother feelings or share any of her own (no E = Empathy, no A = Assertiveness). Instead, she implies that her mother is “wrong” and ends by saying “there’s no point” in talking, which may feel very hurtful to her mother (not much R = Respect). Eileen did not see this very clearly at first, and thought she *had* shared her feelings and communicated a loving way. She *did* try, and deserves credit for that! Still, you can see the three check marks in the “Bad Communication” checklist above.

Eileen’s mother had implied that her daughters “hate” her. Eileen’s somewhat unloving and argumentative response may reinforce that perception. The willingness to see this in yourself (in this case Eileen’s willingness) involves the “Great Death” described by the Buddhists.

David and Fabrice emphasize that Eileen has a wonderful attitude and desperately wants to develop a more loving relationship with her mother.

**Step 5 – Revised Version:** Revise what you wrote down in Step 2. Use the “Five Secrets of Effective Communication.” If your revised response is ineffective, try again.

David and Fabrice model more effective responses on the Podcast, and illustrate how you can use the Five Secrets of Effective Communication to transform a hostile, argumentative interaction into a loving. They also show how you can use “Changing the Focus” (one of the advanced communication techniques) when you are pressured by someone on the other side of the political divide.

Eileen sent David and Fabrice a follow-up email that she had tried using the Five Secrets with her mother, and that their relationship had improved dramatically.

\* Copyright © 1991 by David D. Burns, MD. Revised, 2007, 2016.