

DIALOGUE GUIDES FOR COUPLE CONVERSATIONS

Sort out the three common conversations.

A. “What Happened” Conversation

1. Where does each of your stories come from?:
 - a. Different information, different past experiences, different rules and cultures
 - b. Disentangle intent from impact
 - c. Abandon blame

B. “Feelings” Conversation

1. Own feelings
2. Identify underlying and hidden feelings
3. Describe your feelings (as opposed to venting)
4. Acknowledge yours and your partners’ feelings

C. “Identity” Conversation

1. Identify what’s at stake for you
(am I competent? a good person? worthy of love?)
2. Complexify your identity: Adopt the both/and stance
(I am frightened and competent)

Adapted from Stone, D., Patton, B., Heen, S., & Fisher, R. (2010). *Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.