

Requests in a Moment of Reactivity

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Reactivity is inevitable in any relationship, but especially with those close to you. You likely have all sorts of ways of meeting reactivity in the moment, some helpful, some not helpful. You would like to be able to trust yourself to reliably intervene with reactivity .

If you can catch reactivity in the first few moments it arises, you have a chance of making a shift before damage is done. Empathy often helps with reactivity, but seeing the other person's reactivity usually triggers your own and genuine empathy can be difficult to access. Expressing vulnerability and making a request before you are swept up in the wave of reactivity may be the most helpful thing you can do.

This might mean setting a boundary or making a request to shift in the moment. If you choose to set a boundary, follow through on what you say. For example, if you say,

"Your tone of voice isn't working for me. I am not willing to continue the conversation in that tone. Are you willing to shift?"

and the other person says yes, but proceeds in the same way, it's important to walk away at that point.

Have some key boundary phrases ready like:

- This isn't working for me. I will talk with you later.
- What you're saying hurts, I am not going to continue the conversation this way. Let's try after dinner.
- Your analyses of me is painful, please stop.
- I am getting reactive, I don't want to respond from this place. Let's talk tomorrow.
- This isn't helpful. Let's stop for now.

If you are hoping the conversation could continue, then your requests are asking for something different in the moment so that you can connect. Some examples might include:

- I feel disconnected hearing your thoughts about me. I can hear your experience and requests, will you share that part?
- I want to hear you, but I can only take in a little at a time. Let me reflect back what I heard so far.
- I'm not feeling grounded. Can we pause for a moment and focus on 3 deep breaths?
- I'm not able to connect to what you're saying. Would you be willing to say it in a different way?
- I'm feeling nervous, because I want this to go well and it seems like things are getting reactive. Would you be willing to pause and engage your anchor?
- I want to pause here and let you know that I'm not judging you and I really do want to understand.
- Before you say more, I want you to know that your needs are important to me and I care about you getting what you want.
- I'm sorry my tone was sharp. That's not the way I want to communicate. Can I have a redo?
- I feel myself reacting to your tone of voice. Is there something I could offer that would help you soften your tone?
- I notice I'm feeling reactive. Would you be willing to offer me reassurance that you're not judging me?
- I am getting lost. Can we pause here, get a snack, and come back?

These phrases are meant to give you a sense of what's possible. However, the most important thing is to remember that you can pause. That it really is okay to pause at anytime. Remind yourself that it's essential to prioritize the quality of connection over the topic at hand and these kind of phrases will

arise naturally. Simply giving yourself and the other person permission to pause at any time to get grounded, sets you up for a successful dialogue.