

TS Talking Stick

Family Harmony

The introduction of a Talking Stick into your family environment will help facilitate a monumental shift in the way that you, your partner and your family communicate for years to come.

If used properly, it is an effective way to improve communication during times of conflict or grievance. Metaphorically speaking, it is not to be used as a truncheon or battering ram, but a solemn symbol of wisdom, light and truth.

The Talking Stick

Introducing the concept of a Talking Stick to your partner (and family) is a very important journey for you to embark on. If introduced correctly, it will help promote harmony and communication within your home.

Follow these guidelines as a couple:

- Purchase a Talking Stick at a local spiritual/alternative store, or make one yourselves. You may wish to use feathers, jewels, beads, gem stones, etc. to adorn the stick to make it “uniquely yours”.
- Both of you must agree with the choice.
- Introduce the Talking Stick to your family in a supportive and caring way. Every family member it to contribute to the decision as to where it lives in the house.
- Everyone needs to know, that when there is friction, grievance or a dispute in your relationship or household, that the Talking Stick is the path to resolution.
- When you or someone in your home is aggrieved or confused, it’s time to get the Talking Stick out.

Talking Stick Agreements

- ✓ The Talking Stick takes priority over all other forms of communication.
- ✓ When the Talking Stick comes out, there is an agreed time frame set to commence discussions within 24 hours of its arrival on the table or other agreed place.

Instructions

You, or someone in your home, can use the Talking Stick when aggrieved or confused.

Purchase or make a Talking Stick and make it unique by drawing or carving markings into it, and adorning it with various items.

Household members are to abide by and uphold the Talking Stick Agreements.

Setup and approach the discussion with a sense of ritual (rather than sitting on the couch or around the kitchen table).

To have a Talking Stick discussion, follow the steps starting on page 2:

- ✓ **Step 1 | Prepare The Space**
- ✓ **Step 2 | Discussion Ground Rules**
- ✓ **Step 3 | “Ho Talk” Delivery**

- ✓ Once the Talking Stick process is activated there is **no more to be said** on the subject until you sit down and commence the Talking Stick discussion.
- ✓ Whoever has the Talking Stick has control over the discussion.
- ✓ Everyone in the discussion is to observe the “Silence Code” if they do not hold the Talking Stick. Only the person holding the Talking Stick can speak.

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Step 1 | Prepare The Space

Ensure that the time you have chosen for the discussion suits those involved, and that everyone guarantees that there will be no interruptions or distractions.

Timing is everything - 10pm at night because "all is quiet" is not the best time.

It is important that you make the Talking Stick discussion a serious and respectful ritual to differentiate it from just having a 'chat' while sitting on the couch or around the kitchen table.

Place two chairs facing each other, or create a circle if there are more than two people.

Sit knee-to-knee (knees touching).

Be calm and respectful with each other.

The aggrieved person (the Initiator) is to start with the Talking Stick and other people (or person) are to give their full attention to the aggrieved person.



Step 2 | Discussion Ground Rules

It is VERY important to use words that are NOT based around "YOU" statements e.g. if the dispute is around using bad language, say the "F" word being used around the kids, the old way of discussing it in the moment may go like this...

"You are ignorant and rude and have to stop swearing in front of me and the kids and every time you do it I get very angry with you and cannot stand to be around you. You just have to stop it."

Sound familiar?

So let's look at the same problem a new way.

- The Initiator "A" starts by taking up the Talking Stick and holding it in BOTH hands.
- The other partner "B" looks into "A's" left eye and stays focused on that.

- Maintain knee-to-knee contact (touching). If one of you is not comfortable with making knee-to-knee contact because they are upset, then reschedule the discussion until their anger subsides.

Step 3 | "Ho Talk" Delivery

"Ho" is a term that is used a lot in the ritual space - it means "I hear you". In order for someone to hear you, they must actively listen.

It is important for whoever is delivering their "problem", that it is broken down into short points to ensure "B" can easily remember what has been said in order to be able to provide feedback about what they heard.

Here is an example:

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Partner "A" has the Talking Stick held in both hands and starts by saying, *"The problem I have is that when you use bad language and raise your voice in front of our children, I feel you are being disrespectful and setting a bad example."*

What that brings up in me, is memories of my childhood when my father did the same thing, and how it scared me. So when I hear you swear and raise your voice, I become scared and feel threatened".

The Partner then provides feedback by repeating what they just heard. Always start with *"What I heard you say was ..."* as follows:

"What I heard you say was that you don't like the way I swear in front of the kids, and you don't like it when I raise my voice and swear. I also heard you say that you become scared and feel threatened. Is there more?"

All feedback MUST end on the question *"Is there more?"*

"A" then says "Yes" and continues (or repeats anything that requires further clarification).

"What is also alive in me is the fact that I believe that we have degenerated our respect for each other by allowing this situation to continue. The reason I say this is because in my experience, I have seen other friends degrade and disrespect each other in front of other people, and to me, that is very disrespectful and demeaning. It saddens me greatly.

My sadness is that, in my opinion, we are doing the same, and I want you to hear that I want us to stop it and for us to be more conscious of our words around our kids and each other."

Stop now and allow a response.

"B" says *"What I heard you say was, that you believe that our use of bad language is degenerating our relationship. I also heard*

you say that you have seen others do this and it made you feel sad and that you want us to stop doing it around each other and our kids! Is there more?"

"A" says *"No - I feel you have heard me"* OR continues until he/she feels heard.

"A" then places the Talking Stick down and "B" then takes up the Talking Stick.

Note how the message was delivered in a calm **self-ownership** way.

Person "B" now has the floor (because they are holding the Talking Stick) and delivers what response they need to deliver.

"Okay, I have heard you and I thought it didn't matter that much because I have lived with the 'F' word and swearing all of my life and never realised the consequences of me using it on you and the kids!

I also want to say that I understand you now, and understand why you have been at me so much in the past months to stop swearing. I am sad and very sorry that I was so reactionary to your comments and now see why you were upset with me.

What I also heard you say is around the consequences on our kids, and I too do not want that to continue.

Now I understand, I am very much prepared to change the way I speak and react to you and the kids.

My unconsciousness around this is very immature and I resolve to change the way I contribute towards our discussions and conflicts in the future for both you and the kids."

Partner "A" now responds with Ho Talk.

"What I heard you say was that you are now aware of 'why' I react the way I do, and that you are prepared to work with me in resolving this problem 'we' have created. Is there more?"

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Partner "B" responds.

"No, I heard you and I feel heard by you. I think we have created a solution that both of us can contribute towards."

Once the discussion concludes it is VERY important to stand and hug each other and say "thank you for the clarity" and or "thank you for allowing me to be heard". This is a sure-fire way of ensuring respect and connection with your partner.

Place the Talking Stick back on the shelf where it lives (in full view of the family) until next time.

Enjoy a new way of communicating within your family environment and adopting the use of another useful tool to help you create Family Harmony.



Notes: