

Bridging the Connection Gap

Practical tools for showing up authentically in interactions and relationships.

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Build Up Your Social Intelligence

BIO

Carrie Sackett, MS, PCC is America's Loneliness Coach and specializes in couples, family and group work. For over 25 years, she has been practicing a boldly transformative approach to emotional wellness and personal growth, in the coach's chair and outside the coach's office as an award-winning Fortune 500 global change leader and employee engagement professional and international nonprofit executive of innovative youth and community-based development programs.

She authored *Social Therapeutic Coaching: A Practical Guide to Group and Couples Work* (Routledge, 2024) and her articles have been published in *Choice: The Magazine of Professional Coaching* and *Coaching Perspectives*. She appears on numerous podcasts and gives talks at coaching conferences and universities.

Her most popular public talks include: "Why We All Feel Lonely—And What We Can Do About It" and "We're Doing Our Emotions All Wrong! New Tools for Creating Mental and Emotional Well-being".

Carrie received her undergraduate degree at Duke University and her masters in Strategic Communications from Columbia University. She currently serves on the Board of Mentally Anonymous as the Director of Emotional Growth and Well-being.

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Exercise Your Communication Muscles pp. 3-6

Most of these exercises can be done solo. One requires a partner. They are powerful prompts for self-reflection and self-discovery.

Excerpted with permission from *Social Therapeutic Coaching: A Practical Guide to Group and Couples Work* by Carrie Sackett and Murray Dabby, Routledge 2024.

Trying Out New Lines pp. 7-8

5 communication options to test out with someone you're close with.

You are encouraged to shape these in your style! The challenge is to do so without sacrificing the underlying intent to stretch and stay in the 'we'-ness and uncomfortableness that comes with trying to communicate in new ways.

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Social ▾

Seeing the “WE” in the conversation

Exercise	Status
Spend a day noticing the “we” questions you and others ask and whether the answers are “me” or “we” oriented. What is it like to be noticing these questions and answers?	Not started ▾
Try telling a story by using “we” as the regular pronoun, rather than “I” or “me.”	Not started ▾
Go through the day asking people you are close with, “What’s it like for you to hear me say that?” and discover what it is like for you to do so. Notice if people’s responses to you are any different, and if so, how.	Not started ▾

What it’s like to experiment adding the “WE” lens to your interactions?

Cognitive ▾

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Give up PRE -knowing and improvise

Exercise	Status
<p>When someone asks you a question, try responding with, “I don’t know. How can we create the answer together?”</p>	<p>Not started ▾</p>
<p>Try this improv exercise with someone. <u>Part I) Somatic</u></p> <p>Have your improv partner say out loud three times slowly–“No, but...” Notice how your body responds. Then have them do the same thing saying, “Yes, but...”; and finally, “Yes, and...”</p> <p>Does your body react differently to these three formulations? Does it close down? Do you feel tension? Does it open up?</p>	<p>Not started ▾</p>
<p>Improv exercise continued. <u>Part II) Conversational</u></p> <p>With your partner, spend two minutes planning a party. The first time, you and your partner respond to each other by starting every sentence with “No, but...” The second time, respond to each other starting with, “Yes, and...”</p> <p>What were the experiences like? What did you discover about what you could or could not create together? How close were you feeling with your partner?</p>	<p>Not started ▾</p>
<p>Without telling your friend, family member or colleague, try listening with the intention of “yes, and-ing...” (to build with) what they are saying. What do you discover/experience in communicating in this manner?</p>	<p>Not started ▾</p>

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What's it like focusing on being fully present in the moment and not trying to know or pre-know?

Emotional ▾

Relate to emotions as more ordinary

Exercise	Status
<p>Try including how you are feeling in the moment as you speak with someone.</p> <p>How does it feel to share with someone your authentic emotional experience? How does doing so impact the conversation?</p>	Not started ▾
<p>When you are feeling your usual way, try doing a new performance. For example, if you are stressed at dinnertime with your family, try performing curiosity about someone else's day instead of focusing on your own.</p>	Not started ▾

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Relate to emotions as more ordinary

Exercise

🔍 Status

Spend some time considering how your relationship with your partner or close friend/family member has transformed over time and share that with them.

Not started ▾

What kind of conversation follows from that?

What comes up for you as you try embracing your emotionality in the moment? What choices are you making? How do they feel?

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Trying Out New Lines

5 communication options to test out with someone you're close with.

We mentioned two in the video.

- **Do a “Take 2”.** When a conversation is getting tense and you're getting irritated with someone you're close with, stop the scene by giving what's going on for you in the moment and suggest you re-do the conversation. (something like, “OK, I'm getting irritated. We're doing our usual bickering. Let's have a do-over”)
- **Don't assume you know what someone means.** Perform curious. (“What does ‘trigger’ look like for you?” ; “What do you mean by ____?”)

Acknowledge the situation

“This is going to be a difficult conversation. How do we want to do this?”

- Notice how inviting the ‘WE’ makes you feel
- Work on “Yes, and-ing...” whatever they say. Let them know you heard them and add how you're wanting to do the conversation
- Notice what emerges. Are you able to co-create **how** you have the conversation?
- Do you feel like you capitulated to their wants? If so, consider further exercises for building up your relational muscles. Joining a Life Development Group at ZPD Coaching is a great way to gain confidence and practice

Your experiences, feelings, wonderings and thoughts here.

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Provide leadership when old patterns repeat

“Uh oh. I feel like we’re doing our same old conversation! Yuck, we’re stuck! Let’s do a do over/take 2.”

- What’s it like to give how you’re feeling in the moment and add a ‘WE’ invitation?
- Notice what’s different during Take 2 version—how you feel, your experience of the other person, the quality of the conversation
- If it feels impossible to try this line or there’s no change to the conversation, consider getting further support. I will be your partner in supporting your capacity to take the lead in saying hard, yet caring words.

Your experiences, feelings, wonderings and thoughts here.

Do a pre-ask. Invite in others before things get difficult

“This is a stressful time for me. I’m going to need to ask you for stuff to support me getting through this. I don’t even know yet what exactly it is I need. Are you open to me asking you when the time comes?”

- Notice what difference you feel asking if someone is “open to supporting you” versus asking someone for help
- How does it feel to include someone in your journey, without knowing exactly what it’s going to be?
- What holds you back from including others in your process? Consider trying out co-processing in a Life Development Group at ZPD Coaching. We create a non-judgemental and caring environment in which everyone is invited to babble and try out new ways of being, feeling and communicating with others.

Your experiences, feelings, wonderings and thoughts here.