

BENEFITS TO HSPs OF FOCUSING PARTNERSHIP RULES

We desire deep, meaningful connection. But we fear becoming overwhelmed if a conversation gets too intense or goes on too long.

Helpful rule:

- **“Make an appointment and honor it just like you would with a doctor, lawyer, or dentist”.**
When you make time agreements with your partner and keep them, you have the reassurance of knowing up front the time commitment you are making.

We empathize with someone who is in pain and are conscientious about offering support—even more so if we have personally experienced what it is like *not* to have support. But we can feel like prisoners of our own empathy, telling ourselves we are “being mean” if we put limits on the time we spend with someone who is upset.

Helpful rules:

- **“Divide your time in half, no matter what”.** This rule sets the boundary so you don’t have to be ‘mean’. Resist the temptation to be “nice” and give your time to your companion because they seem “more upset” or “need it more than you do.” Keeping your time agreements builds trust in your partnership.
- **The Focuser stops when his/her time is up.** The Companion will support the Focuser by giving them a signal a couple minutes before the end, but *it is the Focuser’s job to finish up on time after that*. If stuff is still “up” for the Focuser when it is time to stop, they can acknowledge it and let it know they can come back later. This is another way you can build trust by keeping your time commitment.

We want to share deeply but fear being judged.

Helpful rules:

- **You, the Focuser, decide what and how much you want to share.** You can even focus on something without saying what the topic is, by simply describing how it is in your body. And you don’t have to explain or clarify anything for the Companion.
- **The Companion never comments on the content of your session.** It’s OK to talk about the *quality of listening* issues, like, “Could you tell I was hearing you? Did it feel like I was there for you?” But we adopt an attitude of trusting the Focuser’s process and not giving advice, analysis, judgment, etc. **One exception:** if something the Focuser is focusing on hits so close to home that you are triggered beyond your ability to stay present, it is OK to be honest and end the session, or find out if there is another topic the Focuser could work on that day.
- **The Companion agrees to ‘put an arm around’ themselves internally** if reactions come up to things the Focuser is saying, but they keep these reactions to themselves.

We are sensitive to the kind of listening we are receiving, and also sensitive to hurting other’s feelings.

Helpful rules:

- **The Focuser gets to ask the Companion for what s/he needs. Examples:** “Could you pause a bit longer before reflecting what I say?” or “I’m needing extra gentleness today.”
- **Never comment on the content of the Focuser’s process.** Each of you will feel safer Focusing when you know the other won’t express judgment, comments, advice etc.