

THE SAFE CONVERSATIONS BRAIN BOOK

**HOW USING
DIALOGUE CREATES A**



Healthier Brain

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How Using
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How Using Dialogue Creates a
Healthier Brain

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INTRODUCTION

Can you imagine a world where everyone has the skills to help each other feel safe and more connected in their relationships? What a wonderful world that would be! A universal human problem around the world is the acceptance of difference. People should be able to feel more relaxed if someone has an opinion that is different than theirs. All humans are a part of nature, and nature is dyadic. Hot, cold. Dark, light. Wet, dry. Sweet, sour. It's important to learn that even if there are differences, we can learn to live together as a global community.

And did you know that having healthy relationships results in a healthier Brain? According to the most recent Brain Science, it's true! The way we communicate with others can improve how our Brain functions. This book shares basic information about the Brain. Throughout the pages of this book, you will learn about the concept of Neuroplasticity, and how a method of speaking to others, called Safe Conversations Dialogue, strengthens our Brain, and relationships.

With Safe Conversations skills, we can be intentional about the way we interact with those around us, whether it's with a friend, a partner, a co-worker, in a business or corporation, or a person in a place of worship. No matter where we are, or who we are talking to, we can use the Dialogue method to create more mutually beneficial connections.

Taking charge of the way you talk will transform your life! Making Safe Conversations Dialogue part of your everyday life will result in more relaxed, peaceful, and connected relationships. With Safe Conversations Dialogue, we can change our Brains, our relationships, and ultimately the world, one relationship at a time!

CHAPTER 1 About the Brain

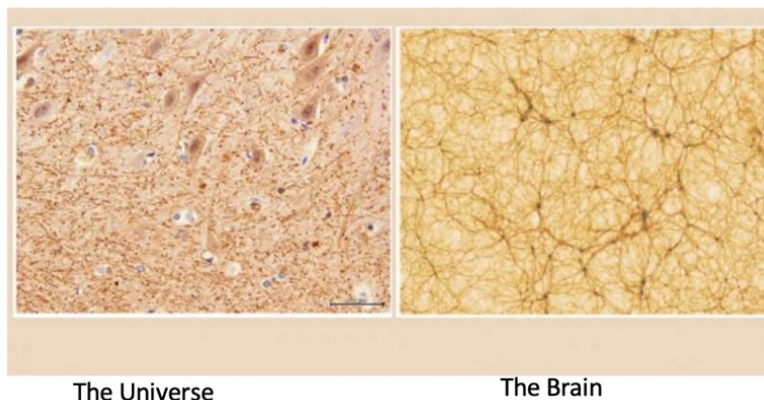
ABOUT THE BRAIN

In past centuries, Brain scientists thought the structure of the Brain was fixed. In other words, it was believed that “The Brain you’re born with, is the Brain you’re going to die with.” However, scientists have discovered that the Brain is more like an evolving organism that, if properly directed, can improve its functioning when a person chooses how to think and speak. Our Brains were shaped by our interactions in childhood, and that determines our relationships in adulthood. Since our Brains are changeable, we can use our relationships to change our Brains.

The Brain is a Wonder

The Brain is considered perhaps the most complex organism in the universe. The Brain weighs only 3 pounds, has 86 billion neurons, and is considered the “Control Center for human functioning.” It is encased in silence and darkness and can be referred to as “our inner universe.”

And did you know: "The Brain Looks Suspiciously Like the Universe?" An astrophysicist, Franco Vazza, and neuroscientist, Alberto Feletti, teamed up to compare similarities between the galactic clusters in the universe and networks of neurons in the Brain. Despite the substantial difference in scale, the two complex systems look strikingly alike!



The Universe

The Brain

The Brain's Basic Function

The Brain's primary job is to keep us alive. This is an important and positive function of the Brain, and we want our Brains to continue to do this. However, if we want to have safe, connected relationships it requires the use of a specific part of our Brain. When we decide to access this other part of our Brain, it releases neurochemicals which support a longer life, a healthier immune system, and creates a sense of calm, hope, and wonder.

The Brain's Ability to Transform

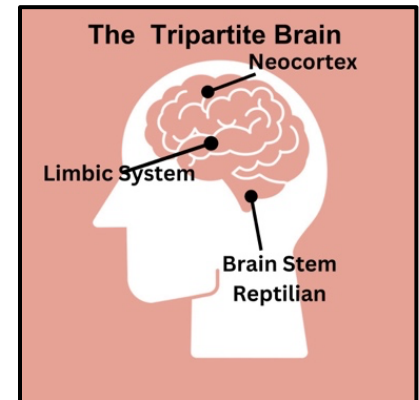
In the 1990s, there were many new learnings about the Brain. One of the most important concepts was what is now called Neuroplasticity. **Neuroplasticity** is the Brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections. Neuroscientists discovered that our decisions to use certain parts of our Brain determine how we can proactively strengthen our Brain function. This was an empowering discovery, because it suggests everyone has the ability to choose which part of their Brain to use when they want to respond to various things. Those neuroscientists clarified that the Brain is shaped by our social experiences, and relationships. As we learn to control our thinking, reactions, and behaviors, we can strengthen our rational and cognitive abilities. This is especially important when we desire to transform our relationships from being tense and conflict ridden, into relationships that have more tenderness, curiosity, empathy, and mutual respect. Our decision to access a different part of our Brain will help create calm in our Brain. And if people in many other places began using Dialogue, it ultimately could improve relational connections throughout our world. In summary, our Brains are amazingly complex and resilient. We can apply "self-directive neuroplasticity" to transform the Brain and ultimately transform our life and relationships. One way we can strengthen our relationships is by learning a powerful method of talking with others called Safe Conversations Dialogue.

CHAPTER 2 The Parts of Our Brain

The Parts of Our Brain

In this chapter we will go into more detail about what was shared in the previous chapter. Before the concept of Neuroplasticity was introduced, for many decades people learning about the Brain understood it as a tripartite or triune Brain, as presented by Paul MacLean in the 1960s. This Brain model suggested the Brain has 3 layers. Let us take an in-depth look at how the Brain was once taught in this simplistic way.

- **The lower part of the Brain.** This reptilian system of the Brain is responsible for the most basic survival functions, such as heart rate, breathing, body temperature, etc. Where there are threats to the body, they are first assessed by this primitive Brain. Its job is to keep you alive by anticipating anything that could possibly be dangerous. It will often have a “peripheral shut-down” where blood vessels in the periphery of the body are constricted in anticipation of physical trauma. This part of the Brain structure is similar to the Brain found in reptiles. Its basic need is safety and protecting the body from harm. When this need is met, this Brain area can relax and when this need is *not* met, this part of the Brain is highly reactive.
- **The Limbic System:** the mid Brain. The limbic system is also a response system designed to keep us safe. Main structures of the limbic system include the hypothalamus, amygdala, and hippocampus. The amygdala is like an “early warning system.” At all costs it, like the reptilian Brain, exists with one goal, **To Keep You Alive**. It operates with one directive, **“safety first.”** Imagine walking down a pathway and suddenly you notice that you are close to a snake-like object; and you jump out of the way. But on closer examination, it is just a garden hose. This system is also a reactive part that when it senses danger, it automatically reacts with fight, flight, freeze or faint in response to danger. The neuro chemicals released during this reactionary response are adrenaline and cortisol.
- **The Neocortex:** the higher Brain. This part of the Brain is the “smart” part of the Brain. It is capable of executive functioning and higher-order conscious activities such as language, and the ability to collaborate, co-create and problem solve. Complex and “new thinking” on technical, emotional, social, and logical plane takes place in this part of the Brain. Sadly, the pre-frontal cortex can be “high-jacked” by the limbic system in the event of a perceived threat.



The neocortex is larger and more sophisticated than the other two layers. **The neocortex has roughly tripled in volume over the last three million years of evolution.** It is termed the higher Brain as it is responsible for higher mental functions and thinking. Other core functions are regulating attention, feelings and desires, complex reasoning, abstract thoughts, and imagination. Its basic need is connection and attachment to others. When human connection is met, **a person feels loved and peaceful.** When this need is *not* met, a person experiences heartache.

While MacLean's triune Brain contributed greatly to the further development of understanding of the Brain, it is now accepted that these three parts are not distinct but are constantly interacting with each other, a dynamic living organism.

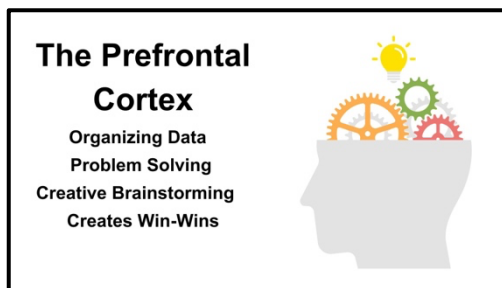
The Crocodile & The Wise Owl

Congratulations! At this point, you have learned a great deal about the Brain. We, the creators of the **Safe Conversations Dialogue Process**, have simplified the Brain even more by referring to the Brain in two delineated sections: The Lower Brain and the Upper Brain. We call the Lower Brain the Crocodile and the Upper Brain the Wise Owl.

- 1) **The Crocodile Brain** - If your thoughts stay in the Crocodile part of the Brain, you easily get frustrated, disappointed and/or angry with other people, spontaneously releasing neurochemicals that are toxic and perpetuate negative feelings. When a person talks to you and you don't like what they said, your "Crocodile Brain" spontaneously becomes activated. You begin to think, 1. "I don't like what the person said" 2. "They are wrong" 3. "I'm smarter than they are" and 4. "They better change their mind or I'm going to leave." The function of the Crocodile Brain is to keep us alive and defend us from harm. So, if it senses danger (and the Crocodile Brain does not distinguish between physical and emotional danger), it will respond with fight, flight, or freeze. The majority of the time the Crocodile lays on the side of the swamp and remains still. Laying on the bank, they snooze, seemingly placid and harmless. However, once the Crocodile feels threatened, it becomes highly reactive. It will spontaneously SNAP without analyzing the situation! It can bite your arm off! A frustrated Crocodile is dangerous to be around!

What drives the Crocodile is primarily, its survival directive: the compulsion to stay alive. For example, if you accidentally touch a hot stove, you immediately pull your hand back. That is "a survival directive" and the movement happens without you even thinking about it. This "survival directive" overrides all other Brain-based functions. It is in the primal lower part of our Brain and operates automatically. Thus, our Crocodile Brain has now taken over our whole Brain and is operating as if on autopilot. Our primal Brain has features in common with the Brains of all vertebrates, from reptiles to mammals. It contains the Brain stem which includes structures that direct breathing/respiration, blood pressure, heart rate and other functions vital to preserving life.

- 2) **The Wise Owl Brain** - The SC Dialogue Process rescues you from the "Crocodile Brain," and invites you to think and feel from the Wise Owl Brain. When you respond to what a person said using Dialogue, you are being thoughtful and intentional, using sentence stems such as "Let me see if I got it... I think I heard you say ..., did I get it? Is there more?" Rather than reacting from the Crocodile, the **SC Sentence Stems** gives you a chance to see if you heard the person correctly. Which is why we call this part of the Brain the Wise Owl. When you use sentence stems you are now accessing the Neocortex. At this point



you are not agreeing with what the other person said. They might be 100% wrong, from your perspective. But by listening to their view, reflecting back what you heard, and checking for accuracy, you are calming the Crocodile Brain and employing the Wise Owl Brain. This calms a person down and makes them feel respected that you will take the time to check the accuracy of what they said.

When you mirror someone, you have been rescued from the energy of the “Crocodile Brain,” the **“My Way or the Highway,”** and you have transitioned into the “Wise Owl,” where you are curious. You are also, at the right time, willing to respectfully share your point of view. Any person who lives in the “Wise Owl” releases the neurochemicals of calm, peace, and curiosity: dopamine, acetylcholine, serotonin, and norepinephrine. This replaces neurochemicals of anxiety and despair such as Adrenaline and Cortisol. These neurochemicals, released through the bloodstream, have been studied by scientists for many years and their data shows that people with healthier relationships have healthier bodies and happier lives.

The Wise Owl is capable of helping you control your Crocodile. The Wise Owl has the capacity to analyze the situation calmly and strategically! The Wise Owl can out-think the Crocodile. The Wise Owl organizes data, problem solves and looks for more creative ways of doing things. It responds calmly and wisely. The Wise Owl looks for opportunities to collaborate, cooperate, and create a “win-win.”

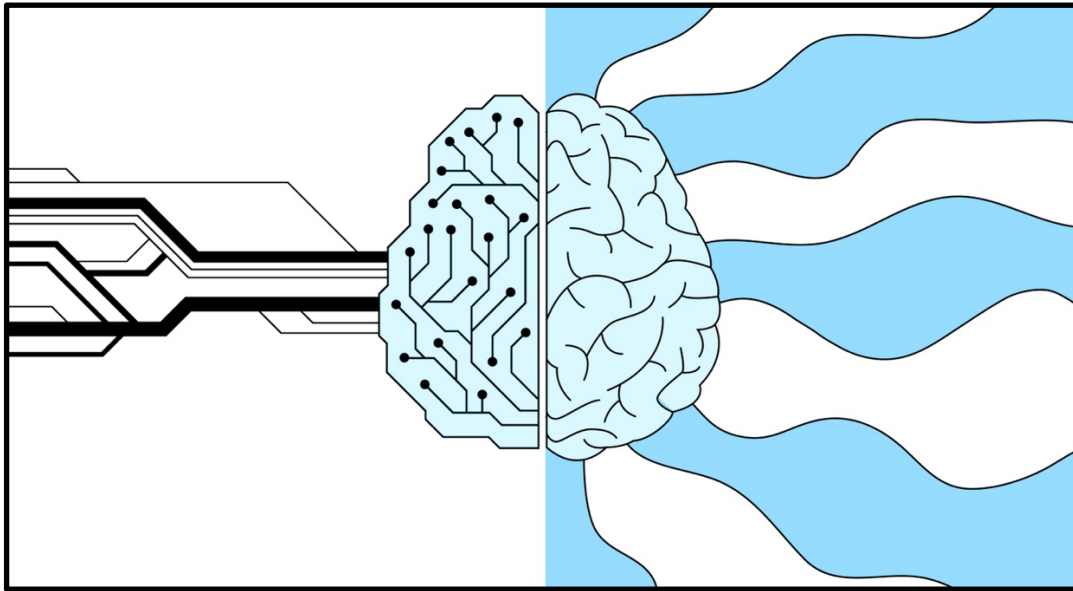
**You have the power to choose which part of your Brain you react with
The Crocodile or The Wise Owl!**



The Thinking and the Feeling part of the Upper Brain

The Upper Brain can be described as having 2 parts. The Left-Brain hemisphere functions more like a computer. It is good with creating structure and people who are Left Brain dominant are often analytical thinkers. Professionals who are good with Left-Brain thinking become architects, doctors, mechanics, or experts in the digital world. The Right-Brain hemisphere thinks in more of a “connected” way. Professionals who are good at Right-Brain thinking are musicians, artists, and chefs. These people are knowledgeable and have a “gut instinct” and are intuitive problem solvers. They are good at creating forms of distributing information that are calming and restful. In a relationship, it is important for people to have both “Right-Brain knowing” and “Left-Brain knowing.” Some people are really good at one or the other.

Up to this point, you have been introduced to basic, simplified information about the body’s most complex organ, the Brain. The following chapters teach about a new way to talk, called Dialogue. Safe Conversations Dialogue teaches how to focus thoughts and words throughout the day with intention. When people use the Dialogue process, it will build a healthier, stronger Brain and create a safer, healthier world.



CHAPTER 3 Safe Conversations: A New Way To Talk

Most people are taught to speak in a way that is known as **Monologue**. And the world has become excellent at using **Monologue**. The current “value system” of most cultures enables this way of speaking by its “*be the Best that we can be*” culture. For a person to “be the best they can be” they study, learn, and strive to be the best of the best, trying to outperform everyone around them. This pursuit of precision and excellence often creates the belief that their way is the right way and the only way. When another person offers a thought or opinion that is different from theirs, that person is usually considered wrong.

Safe Conversations Dialogue invites a person to “take turns talking and listening.” When one person wants to talk, they become the **Sender** of a message, and the person they are talking to learns to be the **Receiver** of the message. Once the **Sender** sends their message, the **Receiver** listens and mirrors them back. And then **they take turns** with the original Sender becoming the Receiver and the original Receiver becoming the Sender. When using Dialogue, both people have the opportunity to talk and listen, which helps everyone stay calm, even if the situation started with frustration or sadness! Using Safe Conversations Dialogue can help people relax and feel safe, while talking about challenging topics. This results in creating healthier relationships.

If you consider the concept of Neuroplasticity, SC Tools can be a wonderful daily **Brain Training**, making our body, as well as our relationships, feel healthier each day. Think of using SC Tools like going to the gym or an exercise class. Just like our bodies, relationships also need preventative maintenance. Similar to building a stronger body with aerobics or bodybuilding, anybody can improve their Brain function when they consistently use SC Tools. The commitment to using SC Tools daily, leads to a healthier Brain, a healthier body, healthier relationships, and a more joyful life. Our success lies where our focus lies.

Learning the Safe Conversations Dialogue Process

SC Dialogue

The magic of Safe Conversations lies in a structure that makes it safe to talk and listen even if two people have vastly different points of view. It becomes an elegant communication tool for the exchange of energy and information. **With structure, Safety happens; and when Safety happens, Connection happens.** Connection ignites a co-creative process that can transform the negative energy of conflict into the vibrant energy of full aliveness.

We once heard it said that "Voice without Echo Dies." It is a beautiful thing to become an echo for someone who wants to do right and wants to live their life well, and yet has struggles and can't make things work as well as they would like. Having a relationship that is willing to wonder and just be present for them can be a tremendous gift to give the other person.

People might say, "I am not willing to use the Dialogue process!" "It's artificial." "It's contrived." "Shouldn't we be spontaneous with each other?" Our answer is this: **"Have you achieved a great relationship without using a structure, in the past? Why not give this a try?"**

Think about someone learning to ski. Watch a skier coming down a double black diamond slope. To you, they look graceful, joyful, and relaxed. However, it takes skill to ski down this steep difficult mountain. You start by learning to snowplow on the bunny slope. Once you can master the bunny slope, you can gracefully, effortlessly, ski down that double black diamond slope. Learning how to have a safe, connected relationship takes similar practice, following a structured way. Once you learn the structure, all your relationships can be safer, more graceful, and more connected.



SC Dialogue is a structured way to talk, guided by the use of sentence stems. The way the conversations becomes structured and safe is when one person wants to talk to another person and they "ask for an appointment." When the other person agrees to the time, the person talking becomes the Sender. The Sender sends a message. The second person, who is the Receiver, says *"Let me see if I've got it. You said..."* followed by repeating the message the Sender sent.

Sentence Stems

- The Sentence stems are good to say every time you use Dialogue.
- They shift you from being reactionary to proactive, creating safety.

This is used as a precursor to mirror what was previously stated. It is followed by, *"Did I get it?"* which is an accuracy check. Then the sentence stem, *"Is there more about that?"* is used to show curiosity, encouraging the speaker to share, which is another precursor before talking. A validating sentence stem is, *"I get what you are saying and that makes sense to me. And what makes sense is..."*

Sentence stems are the structure to create safety in the Space Between. By using the structure of **SC Dialogue**, you can regulate the flow of conversation. You will now understand that after you speak, you will be mirrored and validated, which will make you, the Sender, feel safe.

SC Dialogue

One is the **Sender**.

The other is the **Receiver**.

After the Sender sends a message the receiver mirrors, validates and empathizes.

MIRRORING

Let me see if I've got it. You said...

Did I get it?

Is there more about that?

VALIDATING

That makes sense, and what make sense is...

EMPATHIZING

I imagine you might be feeling...

Is that what you are feeling?

Are there other feelings?

Now that you have learned the SC Process, before starting a Dialogue, the Sender will “ask for an appointment,” by using the phrase, **“Is now a good time to have a conversation?”**

**In the SC Process, the Sender asks for an appointment,
and sends a message using Sender Responsibility.**

Sender Responsibility

An important note: When you speak as the Sender, you must do it "in a responsible way." That means you have the responsibility to send your message in a way the Receiver can receive it calmly. Speak with a kind tone and a kind look in your eye and try not to be too wordy. Without Sender Responsibility, the Receiver may shut down and shut out your message. Sender Responsibility increases the likelihood that the message is heard and well-received.

"Sender Responsibility"

- Use "I" language: I feel, I think, I need, I want.
- Send your message with a kind and respectful tone of voice.
- Be succinct. You will flood your partner using too many words and they won't be able to hear or mirror you.
- When you send your message, have a kind look in your eye.
- No shame, blame or criticism – EVER!

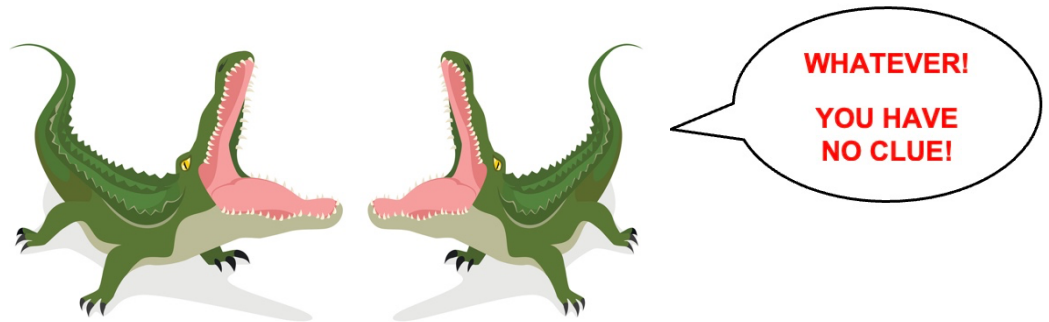
CHAPTER 4 The Wise Owl and Cranky Croc in Action

Friend Conflict

To really see the difference between how the Wise Owl and Cranky Croc act, let's imagine someone is having a birthday party. One of their friends didn't get an invitation. WITHOUT Safe Conversations what would normally happen is that the friend who didn't get an invitation would become upset – or even cranky – like the Croc. This is how it might look:



And, without SC Tools we usually become a Cranky Croc ourselves...



You can imagine how the conversation would go from here...

The uninvited friend might say, **"Well, YOU have no clue!"**

And the friend who's having the party might say, **"You're a jerk!"**

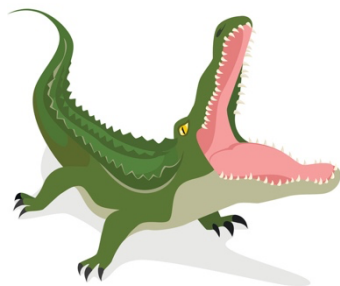
They continue going back and forth yelling at each other...

Until, sadly, they might get to the point where they don't want to be friends anymore.

Friends Using Dialogue

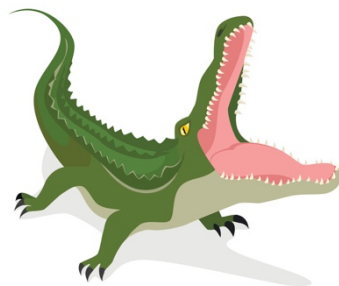
As humans, we can choose whether to talk from the Cranky Croc or whether to talk from the Wise Owl. Below is an example of someone choosing to speak from their Wise Owl instead of responding to a person using their Cranky Croc.

First, the Wise Owl would MIRROR...



If I heard you correctly, you noted that I'm having a party on Friday, and you didn't get an invitation. And you feel like that's really mean.

Second the Wise Owl would WONDER...



Is there more?

And the friend who wasn't invited might say:



Third, the Wise Owl would VALIDATE...



Now, instead of being two Cranky Crocs gnashing their teeth at each other, the two friends chose to have a real talk about what happened.

It is possible the friend having the party DID send an invite – and the other friend didn't get it. Or maybe the friend having the party planned it as a surprise party for the other friend!

Or maybe the friend having the party forgot to invite the other friend.

No matter what really happened, the point is that with Safe Conversations Dialogue the two friends were able to talk and work it out.

FRIEND EXAMPLES

CRANKY CROCODILE APPROACH	SC DIALOGUE APPROACH “SENDER”	WISE OWL RESPONSE TO INVITATION “RECEIVER”	SC DIALOGUE APPROACH “SENDER”	WISE OWL RESPONSE – “RECEIVER”		
				MIRROR	VALIDATE	EMPHATIZE
“Juan, why wouldn't you let me play soccer with you? That is so mean!”	“Juan, is now a good time for a conversation about soccer?”	“Yes, now is a good time for a conversation.”	“Juan, I have been looking forward to playing soccer with you. I was hoping to be invited to play, but when I didn't get invited, my feelings were hurt.”	“Let me see if I got that. You have been wanting to play soccer with me but when you didn't get an invitation to play, you were hurt. Did I get that right? Is there more?”	“That makes sense. I understand why your feelings have been hurt.”	“I can imagine you might be feeling left out. Is that what you were feeling? Do you have other feelings?”
“Hey, I heard you and Mary drove to the concert together. I'm pretty mad you didn't offer me a ride.”	“Is now a good time for a conversation about the concert the other night?”	“Yes, now is a good time for a conversation about the concert.”	“Someone shared with me that Mary rode with you to the concert last night. I would have loved to catch a ride with you too and I'm feeling a bit sad I didn't get to ride along.”	“Let me see if I got that. You heard that Mary rode with me to the concert and you are feeling sad that you didn't ride with us. Did I get that right? Is there more?”	“That makes sense. I understand why you're feeling sad.”	“I can imagine you might be feeling excluded. Is that how you are feeling? Are you experiencing other feelings?”
“Antoine, you said we were going to meet at the restaurant at 6:00 pm. I waited until 6:45 pm and you never showed up. That's inconsiderate!”	“Antoine, is now a good time to talk about our plans to meet at the restaurant last night?”	“Yes, now is a good time to talk about our plans last night.”	“I understood that we were going to meet at the restaurant at 6:00 pm last night. I finally left at 6:45 pm, when you hadn't arrived. I felt embarrassed sitting there so long by myself.”	“Let me see if I got it. You thought we were meeting at 6:00 pm for dinner. When I hadn't arrived by 6:45 pm, you left. You were embarrassed sitting by yourself. Did I get that? Is there more?”	“That makes sense. I understand why you were embarrassed.”	“I can imagine you might be feeling frustrated that I didn't show up. Is that how you are feeling? Are you experiencing any other feelings?”

Partner Conflict

When we are in a partnership, it's natural to have opposite ideas and opinions in different situations. The great news is that we now know we can choose how we interact with our partner when experiencing a conflict.

Let's look at an example of a relationship conflict with our partner. Imagine that it's late in the evening, and a couple start arguing about who does more chores at home.

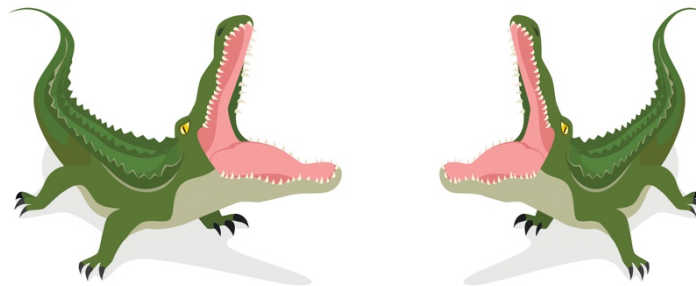


One partner blurts out, **“I am exhausted, I feel like I do all the household chores!”**

The other partner might respond, **“Well, you don’t work as many hours as I do!”**

They continue yelling at each other, back and forth....

And then they go to bed as Cranky Crocs, angry at each other, with no resolution.

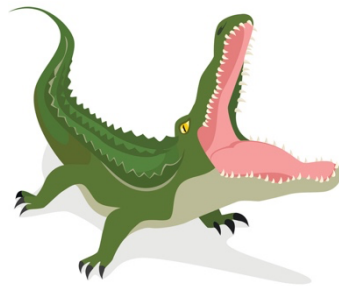


When partners choose to interact from their Cranky Crocs it prevents a safe, respectful, and productive conversation.

Partner Dialogue

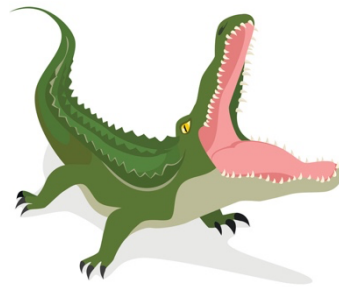
When we interact with our partner, we have the capability to choose whether to talk from the Cranky Croc part of the Brain or whether to talk from the Wise Owl part of the Brain. Below is an example of partners deciding to speak from their Wise Owl instead of responding to their partner using their Cranky Croc.

First, the Wise Owl would MIRROR...



You feel like I don't help with the chores around the house.

Second the Wise Owl would WONDER...



Is there more?

And the partner who feels they do all the chores around the house might say:



Third, the Wise Owl would **VALIDATE**...



Now, instead of being two Cranky Crocs acting or speaking without thinking, the two partners showed they can have a calm, respectful talk about how best to divide the chores at home.

Maybe the partner who feels they aren't getting help with the chores didn't remember the other partner takes out the trash, washes both of their cars each week and walks the dog every day. Or maybe the partner who is accused of not helping with chores didn't notice how many chores the other partner does!

No matter what the situation, with Safe Conversations Dialogue the partners were able to talk and work it out.

PARTNER EXAMPLES

CRANKY CROCODILE APPROACH	SC DIALOGUE APPROACH "SENDER"	WISE OWL RESPONSE TO INVITATION "RECEIVER"	SC DIALOGUE APPROACH "SENDER"	WISE OWL RESPONSE – "RECEIVER"		
				MIRROR	VALIDATE	EMPHATIZE
"John, you ate the last serving of lasagna! I was saving that for lunch tomorrow!"	"John, is now a good time for a conversation about leftovers?"	"Yes, now is a good time for a conversation about leftovers."	"When I went into the refrigerator this morning, to grab my lunch, I noticed the last piece of lasagna was gone. I was upset because I had to eat out for lunch and I really didn't want to spend the money."	"Let me see if I got that. When you went to grab your lunch out of the fridge this morning, the last piece of lasagna wasn't there. So you had to eat out for lunch and you didn't want to spend the money. Did I get that right? Is there more?"	"That makes sense. I understand why you were upset about your lunch."	"I can imagine you might be feeling frustrated that the last piece of lasagna was gone and you had to spend money on eating out. Is that what you were feeling? Do you have other feelings about that?"
"You left your shoes right in front of the door and I just tripped and fell. You're so lazy!"	"Is now a good time to talk about the front door entrance?"	"Yes, now is a good time to talk about the front entrance."	"When I was coming into the house today, I tripped and fell over your shoes. I hurt my elbow when I fell and that fall could have been prevented if your shoes were put away."	"Let me see if I got that. You tripped over my shoes when you came into the house today. You hurt your elbow when you fell and it could have been prevented if my shoes were put away. Did I get that right? Is there more?"	"That makes sense. I understand why you're feeling frustrated."	"I can imagine you might be feeling upset because your injury could have been prevented. Is that how you are feeling? Are you experiencing other feelings?"
"Our credit card bill is getting higher each month. You have got to stop shopping!"	"Is now a good time to discuss our credit card?"	"Yes, now is a good time to discuss our credit card."	"I'm getting concerned about our credit card balance getting higher each month. Would you be open to helping reduce the amount that is spent each month?"	"Let me see if I got it. You're concerned about our credit card balance and would like to come up with a plan to reduce the monthly spending. Did I get that? Is there more?"	"That makes sense why you're concerned."	"I can imagine you're feeling anxious about money and having enough to pay the credit card. Is that how you are feeling? Do you have other feelings you would like to share?"

Workplace Conflict

When we work with other people, it is perfectly normal to have differing ideas and opinions about how to manage a project or process in the workplace. We don't have to be discouraged by this reality because using structured SC Tools we can choose how we interact with our co-workers or supervisors. Using the Dialogue process improves the relational competency of the teams. Let us examine a real-life example of a conflict with our co-worker or supervisor.

A supervisor approaches their employee/co-worker and says, **“The supply closet is getting low on several items. I’m frustrated that you aren’t keeping it stocked?”**

The employee might respond, **“I can’t order any more supplies because there is no budget left.”**

The supervisor responds, **“You should have come to me to request more budget, instead of just letting supply stock run out!”**

They continue the tense conversation, back and forth, with no resolution, just defensive responses that escalate the situation.

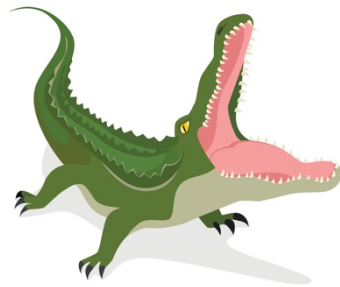


When co-workers choose to interact from their Cranky Croc it keeps the business from running smoothly and reduces productivity, which ultimately costs the business additional money.

Co-worker/Supervisor Dialogue

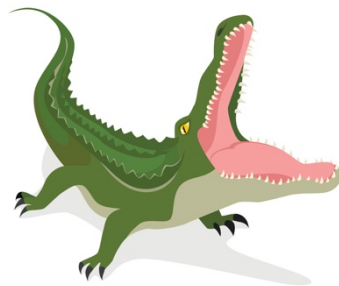
When we interact with our co-workers or supervisors, we have the option to choose whether to communicate as a Cranky Croc or whether to talk as a Wise Owl. Below is an example of how a supervisor and co-worker can choose to speak from the Wise Owl part of the Brain instead of using the Cranky Croc part of the Brain.

First, the Wise Owl would MIRROR and CHECK FOR ACCURACY...



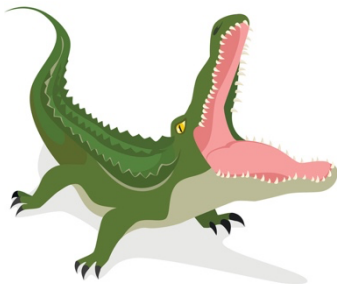
Co-Worker: You noticed that the supply closet is getting low on some items and want to know why stock is low? Did I understand you correctly?

Second the Wise Owl would WONDER...



Is there more?

And the supervisor might say:



Yes, I have asked to always keep at least three of each item in stock but there are several items with less than three.



Third, the Wise Owl would VALIDATE...



Maybe the co-worker ran out of budget for the month and is waiting until next month to stock the supply closet.

OR maybe the co-worker had sent an email to the supervisor to request more funding to stock the supply closet and the supervisor hadn't read the email yet.

No matter what the situation, when the supervisor and co-worker decided to use Safe Conversations Dialogue, they were able to talk and work it out.

Now, instead of being two Cranky Crocs gnashing their teeth at each other, the supervisor and co-worker can have a calm discussion about how they can fix a problem like this in the future.

WORKPLACE EXAMPLES

CRANKY CROCODILE APPROACH	SC DIALOGUE APPROACH "SENDER"	WISE OWL RESPONSE TO INVITATION "RECEIVER"	SC DIALOGUE APPROACH "SENDER"	WISE OWL RESPONSE – "RECEIVER"		
				MIRROR	VALIDATE	EMPHATHIZE
"Jason, the idea you presented in the meeting about consolidating the sales and marketing team meetings was my idea and you presented it as your own! That was a jerk move!"	"Hi Jason, are you available now to chat about the meeting earlier today?"	"Yes, I'm available to chat about the meeting."	"I wanted to chat about the idea presented in the meeting today about consolidating the sales and marketing team meetings. I was upset that you didn't tell the group that I had suggested that idea."	"What I heard you say is that you are upset that I didn't tell the team that you had come up with the idea of combining the sales and marketing team meetings. Did I get that? Do you have more to share?"	"That makes sense. I understand why you are upset."	"I can imagine you may have felt betrayed when I didn't tell the team that you had come up with that idea. Is that how you feel?"
"Mr. Alvarez, every time I suggest an idea you ignore me. I quit!"	"Hello Mr. Alvarez, would now be a good time to discuss something with you?"	"Yes, now is a good time."	"Mr. Alvarez, I wanted to discuss with you that I feel like each time I present an idea to you that my idea doesn't get acknowledged. It is frustrating when I don't receive any feedback or acknowledgment"	"Let me see if I got that. When you bring an idea to me, your idea is not being acknowledged and you are frustrated that you aren't receiving any feedback. Did I get that? Is there more?"	"That makes sense. I understand why your are frustrated."	"I could understand you may feel like you aren't being seen or heard. Is that how you are feeling?"
"Sophia, your constant pen clicking is driving me crazy! Stop being so annoying!"	"Hi Sophia, are you free to talk right now?"	"Sure, I'm free to talk now."	"Sophia, I wanted to share about how I am sensitive to repetitive sounds and I've noticed it's hard for me to concentrate on work when I hear your regular pen clicking."	"Let me see if I got it. You are sensitive to repetitive sounds and when I click my pen over and over, it's difficult for you to stay focused on work. Did I get that? Is there more?"	"That makes sense. I understand why you are struggling to concentrate."	"I can see how that continual sound could make you feel frustrated because your work is being interrupted. Is that how you feel?"

IN SUMMARY

Safety, created in healthy relationships, is what enables the Brain to foster positive social engagement, nurturing, and growth activities. Without safety, the flight, fight, or freeze response takes over, mobilizing the body and Brain to respond to danger – whether the danger is objectively real or merely imagined. When danger appears, our system goes on alert and the reptilian, or crocodile Brain sends out a distress signal. This prompts your adrenal glands to release a surge of hormones, including **Adrenaline and Cortisol**.

These are considered toxic neurochemicals that make you upset, anxious, and angry. In response to the danger, our Brain immediately sounds an alarm and either constricts

Negativity Creates Anxiety and Blocks Higher Cerebral Functioning

You can't change your first thought,
but you can change your second.

1. Negativity Blocks Access to Upper Brain
2. Negativity Blocks Problem solving
3. Negativity Blocks Romantic Feelings



energy through freezing and hiding, submitting or escalates by fighting, fleeing, or fainting. If the Lower Brain perceives something as dangerous, whether it is or not, it is dangerous. To the Brain, imagination is as powerful as anything that is factual or real. Once you are using the SC Tools, you feel safer, your body relaxes, and your Upper Brain can fully function. When our relationships feel safe, the Lower Brain can let down its guard, the neocortex is engaged, and our body begins to release **Endorphins, Dopamine and Serotonin** and it enters a state of relaxation. **These neurochemicals released through the bloodstream have been studied by scientists in the last decade and their findings show that people with healthier relationships have healthier bodies and happier lives.**

Neuroscientists have described the strategic roles played by the Reptilian Brain that go beyond basic survival. This neural system relies on our relationships with other members of our species for health and survival. Our physical survival is equated with the quality of our “felt connection” with others. When we are anxious in our relationships, the whole Lower Brain feels traumatized. When we feel safe, “a felt sense of connection with others,” we are aware of our interconnectedness with humanity, and the world around us.

CONCLUSION The Brain in Relationship: Safety is Essential

The Brain in Relationship: Safety is Essential

Only recently have we discovered that having safe and connected relationships would make a thriving interconnected global community. Most people use Monologue because they've never been introduced to another way to talk called Dialogue. With Safe Conversations Dialogue, people all over the world could shift from conflicted relationships to connected ones. Learning to use Safe Conversations Dialogue is one of the most important things a person can do to improve their relationships.

People who use Dialogue have a healthier Brain and live a more relaxed, joyful life. The Dialogue Process shifts a person from accessing the Lower Brain to interacting from the Upper Brain, or neocortex. Your Left-Brain Hemisphere is used when a person asks for an appointment and sends a message succinctly. The Right-Brain Hemisphere is used to receive the message accurately and empathize. Between the Left-Brain Hemisphere and Right-Brain Hemisphere is the Dorsal Lateral Prefrontal Cortex. The neuroscientist Dan Siegel says that this is the part of the Brain that "moves beyond predication" and takes you into a state of wonder. We wonder when we use the phrase "Is there more ?" This happens when you move beyond thinking "you know everything about a person," and instead you are open to learning something new about the other person. Using sentence stems place you in the healthiest part of your Brain.

In a Mayo Clinic article by Brooke L. Werneburg, they confirm that "Communicating effectively can be challenging in various situations, yet it is crucial for building and maintaining solid, healthy relationships." People who use Safe Conversations Dialogue can benefit by having healthier relationships that lead to less stress, and health benefits such as a stronger immune system, and longer lives. The distribution of Safe Conversations Dialogue could change Humanity around the World. Relationships could focus on problem solving and co-creating innovative solutions for everyone.

It's important to remember that in every conversation, you ALWAYS have a CHOICE about how you will respond, no matter the situation.



Resources

For more information about:

- Harville and Helen, including their speaking schedule, please visit HarvilleandHelen.com.
- Safe Conversations Tools Including workshops and training opportunities, visit SafeConversations.com.
- Imago Relationship resources worldwide and our communities of practice including therapists, workshops, clinical and professional training, please visit ImagoRelationships.org.

About The Authors

Harville Hendrix Ph.D. and Helen LaKelly Hunt Ph.D. are co-creators of Imago Relationship Therapy and a social movement called Safe Conversations. Internationally respected as couple's therapists, educators, speakers, activists, and New York Times bestselling authors, their 10 books, including the timeless classic, *Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples*, have sold more than 4 million copies. Harville appeared on the Oprah Winfrey television program 17 times! Helen was installed in the Women's Hall of Fame and the Smithsonian Institute. They have six children and seven grandchildren.

