

The Power of Dialogue

by Helen LaKelly Hunt and Harville Hendrix



We are often introduced as couple's therapists, educators, and authors. Over the years, we've written more than 10 books, including *Getting the Love You Want*, and have had the privilege of sharing this work with millions of people around the world. We're not sharing our credentials to get you believe in our work, we are sharing our work, because it was born out of personal struggles.

We Decided to Divorce

After the success of *Getting the Love You Want*, our lives became very chaotic, and our marriage became toxic. Harville was deep in his theory work, distancing himself from the marriage and Helen began to point out all the flaws—in hopes of “naming a problem to fix it.” A therapist told us we were “The Couple from Hell.” We hired a divorce lawyer, drew up the papers, told our families. We began making arrangements to step away from our public and professional lives.

We were saving marriages but not doing the work ourselves. We were the cobbler's child, that had no shoes. We had written the book but hadn't “read” it.

Then we decided to fix ourselves by asking the question, “How could we be helping all these people and not ourselves?” We committed to the Dialogue process. After three months our polarization began to wane, Harville's logical interactions and Helen's emotional interactions began to soften. We began to regulate, not just negate each other. We found our way to the end of the “war”.

Dialogue Makes this Possible

Have you ever felt truly heard? Not tolerated, corrected, or analyzed—but heard without interruption, judgment, or defensiveness. When we began to practice Dialogue, everything shifted and we each felt truly heard. Helen no longer criticized Harville for his alone time, and Harville no longer felt bombarded by Helen's emotions. The Dialogue, slowed us down.

One speaks. The other mirrors, reflecting back what was heard, not what was assumed. This simple act begins to shift the nervous system. Defenses soften. Something inside you begins to register: I am safe here.

This sense of safety is not accidental. It is created through structure, presence, and full attention. When we feel safe, we stop bracing for impact. We stop preparing our rebuttal. And for perhaps the first time in a long time, we allow ourselves to be known.

From Adversary to Other

In that safety, something else begins to happen. We start to experience our partner differently. Not as an adversary. Not as someone who should think like us, feel like us, or respond like us. But as someone other than us. We go back to those moments of curiosity when we first met, the feeling of wanting to hear every detail of their lives and inner world.

This is the beginning of real connection. When you listen deeply, you stretch into your partner's world. You begin to see through their eyes, feel through their experience, and make room for a reality that is not your own. And in time, your partner learns to do the same for YOU.

This mutual expansion is what transforms relationships. It moves us beyond coexistence into true connection. But this is not what most of us were taught.

Offering the Gift We Long For

Dialogue doesn't just give us something. It asks something of us. It asks us to offer our partner the very thing we long for ourselves.

To listen.

To empathize.

To truly understand that their point makes sense to them.

This doesn't mean we agree. It means we are willing to honor their experience as valid within their world. And that shift from judgment to understanding is profound.

Honoring the Space-Between

In Dialogue, we begin to see the relationship not as something inside each of us, but as something we are co-creating. The "space-between" you and your partner becomes something sacred, something alive. Something that reflects how you are showing up with each other.

When that space is filled with interruption, judgment, and defensiveness, it becomes strained and fragile. But when it is filled with presence, empathy, and curiosity, it becomes resilient and connected. Dialogue is how we care for that space.

When Difference Becomes Connection

Over time, something remarkable begins to happen. Difference is no longer a threat. It becomes the very ground of connection. Instead of fearing what sets you apart, you begin to see it as an opportunity to grow—to expand beyond your own perspective and experience more of the world through another. This is not just relational work. It is transformational work. Because it changes not only how you relate to your partner, but how you move through the world.

Two Realities, One Connection

This is the power of Dialogue: two realities safely existing at once. No one erased, no one diminished, no one needing to win. Just two people, choosing to understand before being understood. And in that choice, something new becomes possible. Not just better communication but a different kind of relationship—one rooted in safety, curiosity, and connection.