



Bids for Connection



Content on this side is intended for the educator's reference. The information on the back can be photocopied and shared with clients.

Objective: Clients will learn to notice and respond to each other's bids for connection to help keep their relationship moving in a positive direction.

Audience: This tool is applicable with clients at various stages in their relationships.

Estimated Time: 15-20 minutes

Educator Instructions: Before reading the instructions on the tool, start with the Discussion Starter provided below, or something similar. After talking about the meaning of bids for connection and some of the different types of bids, read the two scenarios and help clients identify ways to create a bid for connection. Following are sample responses you might suggest:

Example 1: It may be best to give your partner a few minutes of down time after coming home from work (or even an hour – you know your partner best) before you try to engage in a positive interaction. Then ask your partner "What happened at work today?"

Example 2: The key here is to focus on the partner's happiness, even if you are not comfortable with the idea of seeing your partner less. So you could say, "That's amazing. I knew you could do whatever you set your mind to!" Take time to listen to what he or she is thinking about the new opportunity. Wait until a little later to discuss any concerns you may have with the job. Initially, the focus is on creating a positive bid for connection.

Discussion Starter: With couples, a "bid for connection" occurs when one partner reaches out to the other for help, attention, affection, or other types of connection. The way his/her partner responds is very important. If the partner ignores the bid or says something negative, the person making the bid might be less likely to make similar bids in the future. On the other hand, if the partner "turns toward" and shows interest in what his/her partner is saying or doing, this helps make the relationship move in a positive direction. Positive responses send a message that partners care and understand each other and make the other person feel good about himself/herself and about the relationship.

Follow-up: During your next visit, ask if they were able to recognize and respond to each other's bids for connection.





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Successful relationships have at least five times as many positive interactions as negative ones. One key to creating and maintaining more positive than negative interactions is by noticing a partner's "bid for connection." A bid is any type of request for connection to another person. Here are a few examples:

- Questions – "How was your day?" or "What do you want to do tonight?"
- Gestures – Reaching out to hold hands
- Facial expressions – Smiling or winking
- Touch – Hugging or kissing

Read through the following examples and think about how you could "turn toward" your partner.

Example 1:

Your partner walks in the door after a long day of work, sits down on the couch, and turns on the television without saying a word. How would you respond?

Example 2:

Your partner arrives home from work excited and happy. S/he was offered a higher paying job at work, but will have to work longer hours. How would you respond?

Now think about your relationship. When you are with your partner, how often do you give positive responses? What can you do to be more responsive to your partner's bids for connection?

Turning toward bids for connection help keep relationships positive and moving forward.