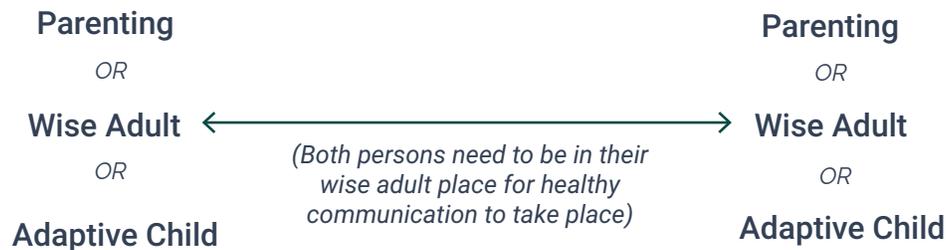




# Respectful Adult Communication (RAC)

A framework for managing conflict through healthy communication

## Step 1. Ask yourself "what place am I in right now?"



## Step 2. Ask yourself "what place is my partner in right now?"

If both persons are in their **wise adult** place.



Great job! You are ready for Respectful Adult Communication (RAC).

Flip to the backside of this sheet to start the repair work through RAC. Remember, the repair work can be tough, but it is more important than what caused the upset.

If one or both persons are in their **adaptive child** place or **parenting** place.



Time for a break! The conversation should be paused until both persons are in their **wise adult** place.

Choose a time that you both agree on to resume the conversation. It could be in 20 minutes or two days, but it is important that you both agree to return to the conversation. This is called the repair work and it cannot be skipped or swept under the rug.

## How do I know what place I am in?

### Parenting

Acting controlling, giving directions or instructions

*Example: One partner calls the other person messy as she picks up shoes that are left in the doorway. She audibly sighs and says, "you need to clean up after yourself! How many times will I have to ask you?"*

### Adaptive Child

This can look different for each person. Oftentimes, it shows as an intense emotion like anger or frustration that is difficult to control. You could also become quiet and retreat, or respond with an attitude.

*Example: Two partners disagree about cleaning. One partner quickly responds with a sarcastic comment about the other person's flaws and slams the door as they leave the room.*

### Wise Adult

You feel calm, clear and emotionally regulated. *(Note: you do not need to agree with the other person here)*

*Example: After a disagreement, both partners are emotionally dysregulated. They agree to pause the conversation. After an hour apart, they both feel calm, cool and collected. They are both in control of their emotions and are ready to communicate with respect.*

## Using Respectful Adult Communication “RAC”

Now that both persons are in their wise adult place, healthy communication can take place. Both persons should have the opportunity to communicate their experience, followed by their feelings and needs.

Describe the situation you experienced.

- What happened?
- How I felt?
- What I said?
- What I did? (actions)
- In my \_\_\_\_\_ place I said or did \_\_\_\_\_ .  
*parenting or  
adaptive child*

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
*i.e. upset, overwhelmed, stressed, tired, confused, nervous*

I need \_\_\_\_\_  
*i.e. time to calm down, time to rest, help with \_\_\_\_\_*

I don't need \_\_\_\_\_

I want \_\_\_\_\_

I don't want \_\_\_\_\_

I like \_\_\_\_\_

I don't like \_\_\_\_\_

### Validate feelings

Use phrases like:

“It makes sense to me that you  
feel \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_ .

### Don't focus on intent

Even if you had good intentions, what matters now is the impact of your words or actions. Good intentions do not lessen the other person's suffering. Focusing on intentions can also lead to placing fault and blame.

### Let go of your ego

Don't focus on your own goodness in the situation. It is natural to want to protect yourself, or “prove” yourself right, but this blocks the ability to truly understand the other person's experience and needs.

### Be honest about your feelings

Emotional honesty means that you are honest with yourself and others about how you feel. Oftentimes, we try to protect a loved ones feelings by not sharing our own feelings or we worry about the other person's negative reaction.

