

Before responding to someone who shares, ask myself (maybe even out loud):

1. Am I about to respond in an **uninterested, impatient, dismissive or emotionally disconnected** way?
2. Am I about to **turn the attention to me by giving my opinion, telling a story or signaling my need to be attended to**?
3. Am I about to **diminish or invalidate** with any version of *You shouldn't feel that way, Well at least..., But... or I see it differently?*
4. Am I about to **offer a solution or advice, mentor, teach or coach** without them requesting it?
5. Am I about to **counter, correct, evaluate (criticize or compliment), argue with, blame or shame** them?

If YES, don't talk.

If NO, follow each step in order. Read all italicized words out loud.



Light WAIT

Mirror their emotion & energy. Make eye contact. With your mind and heart, join them in their story.

1. **Be with.** *Thank you for sharing. I'm glad to be with you. Could we explore this more together?*
2. **Narrow the focus & ask for details.** *Tell me a little more about that. Which moment or scene stands out in your mind? In that moment, what did you see, hear, taste, smell, or feel on your skin?*
3. **Ask heart-level questions.** *What emotions were you feeling? Did you notice any physical sensations with your emotions?*
4. **Summarize, Reflect & Empathize.** *What I'm hearing is when ___, you felt ___. Am I close? As I listen, my heart feels ___ with you. If I were in your shoes, I might also feel ___; do you?*
5. **Ask an identity question.** *Where in this story were you your best self?*
6. **Mine the meaning.** *How is this memory significant for you? What did this event, or telling the story, help you realize?*
7. **Acknowledge the goodness.** *What I hear is you experienced ___ and felt ___. You were your best self when ___ and it was significant because ___. How good that you ___, and that God ___! Thank you for letting me listen and experience your story with you.*



Heavy WAIT

Take a breath. Leave quiet space. Slow down. Pause. Make eye contact. With your mind and heart, join them in their story.

1. **Be with.** *Thank you for sharing. I'm glad to be with you, no matter what. If that's all you want to share, I can just be with you and offer support. Would you like to explore this more together now?**
2. **Offer strength & safety.** *I'm strong enough and calm enough to welcome your heavy emotions. I won't judge or condemn you. Your feelings just are.*
3. **Attune with compassionate curiosity.** *Would you share more? Were you feeling other emotions? [Reflect w/out Red Zoning]. What was it like for you? [R]. How was your body feeling it? How do you feel about feeling this way? [R]. Does part of you feel differently? **Optional:** Have you felt this way before? [R].*
4. **Summarize & Reflect [use the Sender's words].** *What I'm hearing is ___ happened, and you feel ___. Did I get that about right? Is there more? [R].*
5. **Empathize.** *I feel the weight of this with you. As I see this through your eyes, my heart feels ___. I can feel what you experienced. Do you feel seen & heard?*
6. **Validate.** *Your emotions aren't wrong. You're not crazy. It makes sense that you feel this way. Is there anything else you'd like to share?*

[Repeat Steps 3-6 as needed]

7. **Offer support.** *What does support look like? We could pray silently or aloud; listen to Jesus together; brainstorm solutions; share similar stories or advice; consider perspectives to name what's true, significant & good; something else?*

* Note: If the Sender does not want to share more, skip to Step 7



General Instructions for Using the WAIT card

DESIRED IMPACT : That each person will feel more seen, heard, and understood than before sharing. That each person will feel they're not alone, and "feel felt," whether sharing light or heavy emotions

Our goal as listeners is NOT to fix, advise, solve, correct, teach, invalidate, rebuke, placate, or talk about ourselves. Read that again.

Note: For a quick check-in, allow 2-3 minutes for each person to share and 5-7 minutes for listeners to respond, ask questions, and attune. Consider breaking into groups of 2-3 to allow time for every person to share.

SENDER

- **Use a timer** to *monitor yourself* and ensure everyone has a turn to share. It is crucial to honor time constraints and to respect the listeners' time and capacity.
- **Choose an emotion word (or words—light or heavy)** from the Feelings Vault associated with an event in the **recent past** or describing **what you're feeling now**—at *whatever level of vulnerability you're comfortable with*. Passing is *always* an acceptable option.
- The Sensations Vault can help you answer, "**How is your body feeling the emotion?**"
- Take a moment to **think of a "headline" or summary of the event that led to the emotion**. In about TWO minutes, share this brief explanation, avoiding lots of details and backstory. **Allow time for listeners to respond**, ask questions, and engage with you.
- **Use this prompt to share:**

Open the
Vault
Prompt

Sender says:

[Last week, in 6th grade], when [the event that led to the emotions] happened, I felt [feeling #1], [feeling #2], and [feeling #3].

LISTENER(S)

The WAIT card is most effective when Listeners follow the steps with fidelity.

- Give the Sender your undivided attention, refocusing your attention as needed.
- Engage your brain, heart and body—including eyes—in listening. Notice and ask about any changes in the Sender's body language, expression, tone, or pace.
- Read aloud ALL the red zone questions at the top of the WAIT card.
Note: this is often unnecessary for responding to light emotions
- If you can answer "no" to all red zone questions, proceed to use the Light or Heavy WAIT columns. **If you answer yes to any question, WAIT to talk** until you can answer no.
- Use the WAIT card steps in the appropriate column *with fidelity*—**read the italicized words**, step by step. You can repeat a step, but then follow each step again going forward. **Let the Sender decide** if they feel like they've already answered a question sufficiently; **don't assume and skip the question**.
- It might feel awkward to read aloud from the card, but *becoming comfortable with discomfort is key to listening well*.
 - **Positive emotions:** use each step in the Light WAIT column.
 - **For heavy emotions:** use *each* step in the Heavy WAIT column *and* the instructions on this page for **Responding to Heavy Emotions**.
 - **Notice your own emotions**, positive and negative as you listen. Let any of your own defensive, reactive emotions come and go.



Heavy WAIT: Expanded Instructions Responding to Heavy Emotions

Step 0. When someone shares a heavy emotion, pause and WAIT. Communicating that you have time for them is extremely valuable for the Sender's sense of safety and space to process. Notice any "red zone" reactions inside yourself and choose to let them go. Turn your attention back to listening well. If you cannot, don't proceed. Listen with *humility and curiosity*.

Step 1. If Sender prefers not to share more, just be with them skip to Step 6

Steps 2-6. If the Sender wants to explore, use the Heavy WAIT Steps 2-6 **in order**, so you can

- Explore their feelings for more understanding and attune with them
- Reflect as closely as possible what you hear them say, with humility and tentativeness
- Share how you might feel in their shoes and ask if they might feel that way. Being off-target can help them name what they're not feeling and thus what they are feeling. It also helps you understand their unique way of experiencing life.
- Validate and Empathize
- Offer support (see expanded instructions below)

Heavy WAIT Step 7 Expanded Instructions (*Read the italicized words out loud*)

1. ***We could pray silently or aloud, now or later***
 - a. Pause to ask Jesus how to pray for them, then follow His lead.
 - Brief prayer can be respectful, powerful, and appreciated.
 - b. Senders may hesitate to accept prayer due to time concerns; assure them you have time to pray (if you do) and/or ask one person to pray briefly if necessary...even one word!
2. ***We could listen to Jesus together*** (for 1-2 minutes)
 - a. Ask: *What one thing would you like us to ask God?*
 - Set a timer and listen to God around that question. Each can share what they sense from Him but keep it *concise*. Don't share your own thoughts, advice, or stories.
 - b. Ask: *How does what we shared resonate with you? How does it make you feel?*
 - If it feels bad, respond with understanding, curiosity, and an apology if needed.
 - c. Let the Sender share what they heard last.
3. ***We could brainstorm solutions***
 - a. Ask: *What are some creative possibilities or solutions?*
4. ***We could share similar stories or advice***
 - a. Ask: *What specific emotion or circumstance would you like to hear stories about?*
 - b. Take a minute to listen to God and share only stories God leads you to share
 - c. Ask: *How does what I shared resonate with you? How does it make you feel? Does anything feel off-target or bad, and why?*
 - d. If it feels bad, respond with understanding, curiosity, and an apology if needed.
5. ***We could consider new perspectives to tell a story that names what is true, significant and good***
 - a. Ask: *Are there any ideas, beliefs or assumptions you might want to re-evaluate?*
 - b. Ask: *What do you now understand to be true about this experience?*
 - c. Ask: *How might this change your view of the world, God, others and yourself?*
 - d. Ask: *How is it significant for you?*
 - e. Ask: *How would you tell this story that names what is true, significant and good*
6. ***Is there something else you might need us to do?***