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ARC Statements

ARC statements are used to describe boundary setting and owning personal responsibility within a conflict or situation, but it can be applied to general conflicts as well.

Book Excerpt:

“Owning personal responsibility demonstrates maturity. My husband, the boundary king, has taught me this critical life lesson. When we argue, he almost immediately acknowledges what he did wrong. Because he does this, I then feel more inclined to reflect and acknowledge my part in the conflict. Instead of attacking each other by saying awful insults we will later regret, both of us look inward to focus on how we can each change and grow. “

I-statements vs Find your ARC

“I-statements are a specific style of communication that focus on the speaker’s thoughts or feelings. Most I-statements follow the format, ‘I feel _____ when you _____.’ I find these seem incomplete, and they often trigger the other person’s guilt. And when people feel guilty they become defensive...Instead, I use the ARC strategy, which I find to be far more beneficial.

A: Acknowledge your part: Identify the role you play in the dynamic.

R: Report the issue: State exactly what’s bothering you.

C: Collaborate on the solution: Invite the other person to help you improve the situation.”

At first this may feel clunky and linear, but as you practice you will be able to add your own style, humor, or way of being.

Here are some examples:

A: I want to acknowledge that I made a mistake by waiting this long to say something.

R: I’ve noticed that we have been spending less time together.

C: I know you have a lot going on, but it’s important to me that we have quality time. How can I best support you or work on this together?

A: I want to acknowledge that I have found myself withdrawing from you.

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R: When I reflect on it, I realize I began feeling this way when...

C: I know you are a caring and warm person. While I appreciate this. I wonder if we can talk more about this...

The emphasis at the end of this is just to both be looking inward at how one can be the best partner for the other person and work together.

Arzt, N. (2020). Sometimes therapy is awkward: A collection of life-changing insights for the modern clinician. Nicole Arzt.