



## STAR VISTA

### Connection and Communication Guide

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*Welcome to the Holidays! As we gear up for this season with preparations of all kinds, like decorating, meal planning, travel arrangements, and gift shopping, it's also crucial to equip ourselves for navigating potentially difficult situations with loved ones. These gatherings may bring together family and friends with perspectives that, at times, are at odds with our values, or may oppose our desire to express ourselves freely and love who we choose.*

This **Connection and Communication** guide includes language tips for managing challenging conversations, so all individuals feel respected and valued.

#### 1. Setting Boundaries:

- "I appreciate discussing different perspectives, but let's keep it respectful."
- "Can we agree to avoid discussing politics today? I'd like to focus on enjoying our time together."
- "Let's aim to understand each other's viewpoints without trying to convince anyone to change their mind."
- "If the conversation becomes too intense, let's agree to take a break or change the subject."

#### 2. Redirect Conversations:

- "That's an interesting viewpoint. Speaking of which, did you hear about [neutral topic]?"
- "It's great that we're all so passionate about [current topic], but let's explore something else for now. How about [lighter topic]?"
- "I'm curious about your thoughts on [completely different topic]. What do you think?"
- "Before we continue, can I share something funny/interesting that happened recently?"

#### 3. Disengage Gracefully:

- "I think we've explored this topic thoroughly. Let's give it a break and talk about something else."
- "I'm not sure I have much more to add to this conversation right now. Can we move on to something else?"
- "Let's table this discussion for now. What's everyone's plans for the upcoming New Year?"
- "This topic is important, but it's feeling a bit heavy at the moment. How about we switch gears?"
- "I'm finding this conversation a bit overwhelming. Let's revisit it another time."

#### **4. Affirming Statements:**

- "Let's find common ground where we can agree and build on that."
- "It's great that we can have open discussions, even when we disagree."
- "I hear what you're saying, and I appreciate your perspective."
- "Thank you for sharing your thoughts on this. It helps me understand where you're coming from."
- "It's important to consider different viewpoints. Your insights have given me a new perspective to think about."
- "I respect your right to your opinion, even though we may see things differently."

#### **5. Quick Escape Lines**

1. "I need to step outside for some fresh air. Excuse me for a moment."
2. "Oh, excuse me, I just noticed [host] needs some help in the kitchen."
3. "I promised I'd check on [someone/something]. Let me go do that real quick."
4. "I just remembered I left [item] at the table/elsewhere. I need to go grab it."
5. "I told [another guest] I'd catch up with them. I'm gonna go find them now."
6. "I'm going to grab another drink/refresh my drink. Excuse me for a moment."

### **Grounding Techniques Card Deck**

Grounding techniques help manage distress by redirecting attention away from troubling thoughts or worries.

#### **5-4-3-2-1 Technique**

Use this technique to engage each of your senses:

- 5 things you can see: Notice small details like patterns on surfaces or objects.

- 4 things you can feel: Focus on sensations like clothing textures, sunlight, or the surface you're standing/sitting on.
- 3 things you can hear: Tune into immediate and distant sounds.
- 2 things you can smell: Identify scents around you.
- 1 thing you can taste: Carry gum or a snack to introduce a new sensation to focus on.

### **Mental Tallies**

Mentally count as many items as you can in each category to divert your attention:

- Shapes • Movies • Countries • Books • Colors • Cars • Animals • Cities • TV Shows • • Famous People • Sports Teams • Former classmates • Street names

### **Body Awareness**

Strategies to connect with your body's sensations:

- Take 5 deep breaths, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through puckered lips.
- Wiggle your toes and notice the sensations in your feet.
- Stomp your feet to feel contact with the ground.
- Clench and release your fists to relieve tension.
- Rub your palms briskly and feel the warmth.
- Stretch your arms overhead for 5 seconds, then relax.

### **Distraction Techniques:**

- Count backwards from 100 by 7.
- Describe an object's details: color, texture, size, weight, scent, etc.
- Spell your name and others' names backwards.
- List friends/family members, their ages, and favorite activities.
- Read text backwards letter-by-letter.
- Visualize and mentally "draw" objects like your home or an animal.

### **TAP Technique**

Use the TAP technique to ground yourself through touch and focused attention:

(Original wording from 2021: **TAP** stands for **T**ake a breath, **A**cknowledge, **P**roceed. TAP can be used in many situations; when one is becoming dysregulated, stressed, or facing a difficult situation).

1. **Touch:** Begin by gently touching a nearby object, such as a smooth stone, a keychain, or even touching your own fingers together.
2. **Acknowledge:** Acknowledge the sensation of touch. Notice the texture, temperature, and weight of the object or your fingertips touching.
3. **Pause:** Take a moment to pause and focus on the physical sensation without any distractions. Allow yourself to fully experience the tactile feedback.

This technique helps to center yourself and manage stress by redirecting your focus to a physical sensation and mindful breathing.

Longer version, use if desired:

1. **Touch:** Find an object nearby that you can touch. It could be a smooth stone, a keychain, or even your own fingers.
2. **Pause:** Hold the object or touch your fingers together gently. Take a moment to pause and focus on the sensation of touch.
3. **Breathe:** Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose, and exhale slowly through your mouth. Repeat this a few times, focusing on the feeling of your breath as you inhale and exhale.
4. **Notice:** Pay attention to the physical sensations you feel from the object or from your fingertips touching each other. Notice its texture, temperature, and weight.
5. **Release:** After a few moments, release the object or your touch. Take another deep breath and notice how you feel more grounded and present in the moment.