

Worksheet 3.4 : Creating productive partnerships

It is common for different members of the family to have different caring styles. The eating disorder thrives when family members are set against each other (e.g. Dad thinks Mum is too soft, Mum thinks Dad is too controlling.) These splits can also occur between the family and treatment team.

Refer to SBC Chp5 p 51-55 which describes behaviour changes that can help to heal any splits between family members. It can be helpful to use the confidence ruler and solution focused questioning to frame constructive conversations around moving from a divide and rule stalemate to a productive partnership. The aim is for each carer to move from the extreme to the middle ground.

An interesting experiential task is if each parent can take on their co-parents role for instance for a day a rhino parent being more kangaroo and vice versa.

Use the ruler exercise below to explore these mixed emotional reactions (animal metaphors between key carers). it is useful for them to write down on the scale of 1-10 where they are on these polarities before and after the conversation using the questions suggested in the diagram.

Conversations to bring carers alongside each other

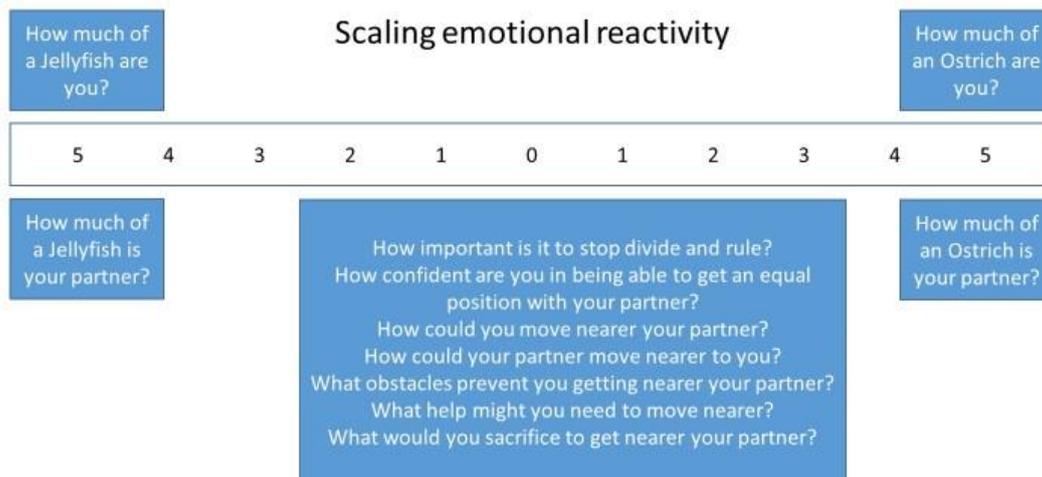


Figure 3.3 Structuring a conversation to move from a divide-and-rule stalemate regarding emotional styles, such as Mum is a jellyfish and Dad is an ostrich, into a productive partnership

Conversations to bring carers alongside each other

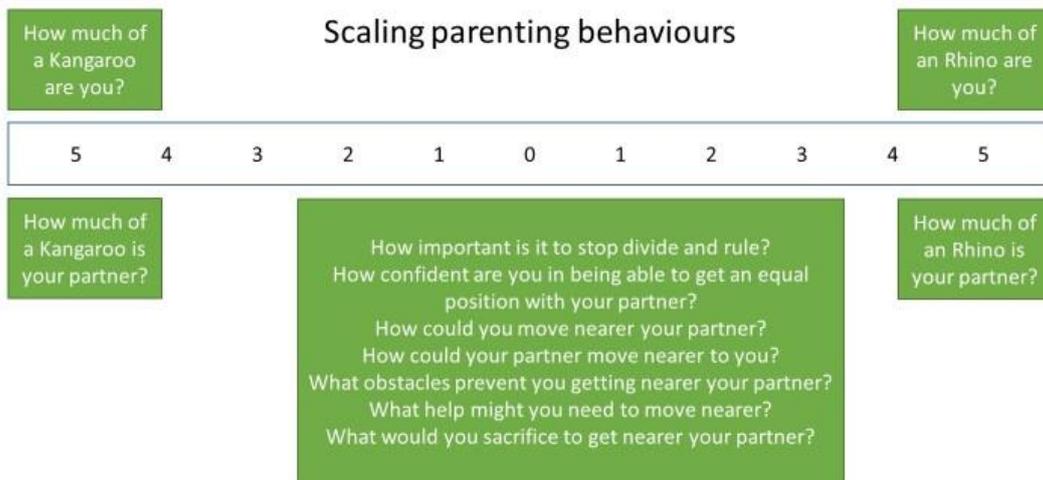


Figure 3.4 Structuring a conversation to move from a divide-and-rule stalemate regarding parenting styles, such as Mum is a kangaroo and Dad is a rhino, into a productive partnership

Change is a gradual process and even moving a tiny bit away from one animal and towards another can start to yield positive results.

Remember carers can have different responses to Edi and still be in harmony. For example, Mum is more Dolphin like and Dad is more St Bernard like and they are in constant touch about whether this is working well. When medical risk is high Mum might be more Kangaroo like and Dad more Rhino like. Again, this can be effective in looking after the immediate needs for Edi and accessing professional help. It is when carers are in conflict that this can be damaging and result in a divide-and-rule stalemate.

