

## **You Can Do This at Home: Back-to-Back**

Role reversal, or standing in another's shoes, can be a powerful tool for breaking out of intractable arguments and emotionally deadlocked positions. It does require a little discipline, patience, and dedicated time.

1. Agree with your discussion partner that you're going to try this approach and know what the topic/issue is you're going to address. Set aside 30 to 60 minutes to give each of you ample time for a turn. It's probably better to wait a little while if you've just had a heated argument since your ability to think clearly is diminished when emotions are still running high.
2. Come to the table sincerely dedicated to proving that you really do understand what the other person is trying to say and, if appropriate, how they feel.
3. Decide who will go first and agree that there will be no interruptions until a comment is invited.
4. The first person speaks, starting with something like "I understand that you feel/think...." and attempts to fully explain the partners position, then asks if anything has been left out.
5. The other person's comments should not criticize the statements, but identify any points they feel should be added or clarified. The first speaker then addresses those points.

This process of checking in and adding points continues until the other person is satisfied that the speaker has fully recognized and explained their point of view.

At this point, you might feel like talking a bit. But, before too long, come back to the process and let the other party take a full turn, following the same process all the way through.

The goal of this exercise is to leave both parties knowing and feeling that their perspective and concerns on a difficult topic are completely understood.