



For couples who feel safe together. If one of you is afraid of the other: England 0808 2000 247 (free, 24 hours); Scotland 0800 027 1234; Wales 0808 80 10 800; Northern Ireland 0808 802 1414; US 1-800-799-7233. In danger, call 999 (UK) or 911 (US). Six calm-time exercises, with space for both of you.

01 Safety first: is this right for us?

Read this on your own first. This sheet is for couples who feel safe with each other and can say no. If one of you is afraid of the other, controlled, threatened or hurt, do not use it, and do not ask your partner to sit down and do exercises. Talk to a domestic abuse service first: England 0808 2000 247 (free, 24 hours); Scotland 0800 027 1234; Northern Ireland 0808 802 1414; Wales 0808 80 10 800; US 1-800-799-7233. In danger, call 999 (UK) or 911 (US).

Check privately, on your own:

- ☐ I am not afraid of my partner.
- ☐ Neither of us hits, threatens or stops the other leaving.
- ☐ I can say no, or leave the room, without being punished.
- ☐ I can say what I really think without fear of what happens next.

What I hope these exercises will make easier for us:

02 1. The 10-minute daily check-in

Sit down for ten minutes at the same point each day, if you can: after dinner, or with a morning drink. Each of you answers the three questions below. The other person listens and does not fix. Then swap. Keep the topic to your own day, not to complaints about each other.

Our three questions (change them if you like): 1. How are you today, in a few words? 2. What is on your mind this week? 3. Is there anything you need from me today?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Partner A

Partner B

When and where we will try this:

03 2. Speaker and listener turns

One of you speaks for a couple of minutes about something small. The listener says back what they heard, in their own words ('So it sounds like...'), then asks, 'Did I get that right?' The speaker corrects or agrees. Then swap roles. The listener does not defend, argue or give advice during this. Start with a topic that is not about each other.

Partner A

What I said, and what I heard my partner say

Partner B

What I said, and what I heard my partner say

Partner A: what was hard about listening or being heard?

Partner B: what was hard about listening or being heard?

04 3. Three specific appreciations

Each of you tells the other three things you appreciated in the last week. Be specific. 'Thanks for making the call to the plumber on Tuesday' lands better than 'thanks for everything'. The person hearing it just says thank you. No 'but' and no 'it was nothing'.

Partner A appreciates...

Partner B appreciates...

How it felt to hear mine, and to say mine:

05 4. One wish

A wish says what you would like, not what the other person did wrong. Make it small, specific and doable this week. 'I wish we could eat together twice this week' is a wish. 'You never spend time with me' is a complaint. Say it, then your partner says back what they heard. They can say yes, no or 'let me think', and any of those is fine.

Partner A: my one wish

I would love it if...

Partner B: my one wish

I would love it if...

What I heard my partner wish

My answer: yes, no or let me think

06 5. A weekly look at our week

Once a week, about 20 minutes. Look back at the week just gone and ahead to the next. This is also the place for logistics, so they do not creep into your daily check-ins. Choose a time when neither of you is rushed.

Partner A: a good moment this week

Partner B: a good moment this week

Partner A: something that was hard

Partner B: something that was hard

What is coming up next week that we need to plan:

One thing we will do together next week:

07 6. Repair phrases for when talk gets tense

Even calm talks get tense. A repair phrase is something you say to slow things down, such as 'Can we pause?' Agree your phrases now, while you are calm. When one of you says one, you both stop for a set time (try 20 minutes), calm down apart, and agree when you will come back to it. Pausing is not walking out, so always say when you will return.

- ☐ 'Can we pause for a bit?'
- ☐ 'I need a few minutes. I will come back at ____.'
- ☐ 'Let me try that again.'
- ☐ 'I'm sorry, that came out wrong.'
- ☐ 'I can see why that upset you.'
- ☐ 'Can we start again more gently?'
- ☐ 'I want to understand, tell me more.'

Partner A: phrases I could say

Partner B: phrases I could say

Partner A: what helps me calm down

Partner B: what helps me calm down

How long a pause we will take, and how we will say when we are back:

08 What we'll keep doing

After two or three weeks, sit down and look at what worked. Keep what felt useful and drop the rest.

- ☐ Daily check-in
- ☐ Speaker and listener turns
- ☐ Appreciations
- ☐ One wish
- ☐ Weekly look at our week
- ☐ Repair phrases

Partner A: what helped most

Partner B: what helped most

What we will do differently, and when we will look at this again:

When you're done, a moment to reflect

- Which exercise felt most natural, and which felt most awkward?
- What did you learn about your partner that you did not know?
- When did you find it hardest to just listen?
- What would you like to ask your partner for more often?
- If the same tense topics keep coming back, would it help to talk with a counsellor?

Free worksheet from selfgrowth.org. Free self-growth worksheets for real life. Fill it in online and it saves as you go: selfgrowth.org/worksheets/couples-communication-exercises



If things feel heavier than a worksheet can hold

These are self-reflection tools, not therapy. If you're struggling, especially if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out to someone now. In the US, call or text **988**. In the UK & Ireland, call **116 123** (Samaritans). Elsewhere, find a free helpline at findahelpline.com. If you're in immediate danger, call your local emergency number.