

THE COUPLE'S CONNECTION

HOW CREATE A FULFILLING
RELATIONSHIP



WHOLE HEALTH
COUNSELING

Mind, Body, Career, Relationships

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Relationships are a blend of joy and challenge, hope and fear, future thinking and reflecting on the past. It's where two independent lives merge into one. During therapy you are embarking on a journey of self-discovery, understanding your partner, love, connection, and healing.

Traci Freeman is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with a wealth of experience in guiding couples through various stages of their relationships. She offers pre-marital counseling, couples therapy, co-parenting therapy and mindful separation counseling.

Whole Health Counseling Center has an awesome team of therapist to support individuals and couples in their journey to fulfillment, awareness and change. Get matched with a therapist by reaching out today: [Connect@ tracifreeman.com](mailto:Connect@tracifreeman.com)

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TOPICS

- **The beginning of a relationship**
- **Individual health check, how am I?**
- **Identify feelings and what they mean**
- **Communication**
- **Managing conflict and mood regulation**
- **Building trust and emotional safety**

THE BEGINNING

“Today, we turn to one person to provide what an entire village once did: a sense of grounding, meaning, and continuity. At the same time, we expect our committed relationships to be romantic as well as emotionally and sexually fulfilling. Is it any wonder that so many relationships crumble under the weight of it all?”

— Esther Perel, [Mating in Captivity: Reconciling the Erotic and the Domestic](#)



Where did your story begin?

Let's return the beginning so you can think about yourself, your needs, expectations, hopes and what you wanted in this relationship. Take a moment to think back in time to who you were when you chose this person.

Who were your relationship role models?

How did you describe love?

What did you emotionally need from this relationship?

What did you physically need from the relationship?

What ideals did you have about this person?

Who were your role models for communication?

What past experiences influenced your choice in your partner?

Now, ask yourself right now, in this moment, who am I in this relationship?

What is still true today and what has changed?

The journey begins with YOU!

WHAT CAN THE BEGINNING TELL YOU?

Reflecting on Your Needs, Wants, and Expectations

When you first began looking for a partner, what were you hoping to find? Take an honest look at how much your partner has been able to meet those needs and wants, both then and now. What have they been able to offer, and what might be beyond their capacity or simply different from what you imagined?

It's easy to place many expectations on one person. We may want our partner to be our lover, best friend, confidant, adventure buddy, motivator, listener, caregiver, and source of comfort. We may also hope they will reduce our stress, share our financial responsibilities, and help us navigate life's challenges. While these are understandable desires, one person may not be able to fulfill every role we envision.

Now, turn your attention to the person you love and consider how you treat them. Not always, but sometimes, we direct our greatest frustration toward the people closest to us because we expect more from them than anyone else. We may become focused on what is missing rather than appreciating what is present.

Are you creating a relationship where both you and your partner feel valued, supported, and understood? Do your words and actions invite vulnerability, openness, and trust? Are you nurturing the relationship you want to have, or are your unmet expectations making it harder for both of you to feel connected?

Next, consider how you can create a fuller, more fulfilling life beyond your relationship. Friends, family, hobbies, meaningful activities, spiritual interests, and personal goals can all contribute to your sense of well-being. Your partner can be an important source of love and support without being your only source of connection, purpose, or fulfillment. If your partner cannot be everything you want them to be, it does not automatically mean they are failing you or that something is wrong with your relationship. It may be an opportunity to better understand yourself, explore your own needs, and consider where else in your life you can find meaning and satisfaction. Taking responsibility for your own growth can help you bring a more grounded, fulfilled version of yourself into the relationship.

Couples can sometimes become so focused on what is missing that they lose sight of what they can influence. It is easy to blame the relationship or wait for a partner to change. It can be more challenging, but often more productive, to look inward and ask what each of us can do differently. This does not mean ignoring legitimate needs or accepting an unhealthy relationship. It means recognizing that meaningful change often begins with understanding our own expectations, choices, and contributions.

INDIVIDUAL HEALTH CHECK

Your presence and authenticity in both your individual journey and your partnership are fundamental to a satisfying relationship. It's crucial to explore and be honest about your own well-being. After all, we're complex beings with various facets of life to consider—there are personal demands, external stressors, and the pursuit of happiness intertwining within us.

- Occupational Health (career, work, professional life)
- Mental Health (wellbeing and stability)
- Physical Health
- Financial Health
- Relational Health (friends, community, peers)
- Family Health (this could be nuclear family or extended family)
- Technology Health (time spent on a device, watching TV, scrolling or working)
- Sexual Health

Reflections for you to consider:

Am I happy with my job and/or career? How do my feelings about this impact me on a daily basis? How do they impact how I show up in my relationship? If things are bad to awful, am I doing anything to change the situation?

When I think about my mental health, how would I describe it? Am I satisfied with this? How does my mental health affect my relationship? Does my partner honestly know what I am feeling and going through?

I would describe my physical health as:

Is this something I like or dislike? How does my physical health impact my relationship?

How do I feel about my / our finances? Would I describe myself as comfortable, consumed with, avoidant, ambivalent, obsessed or content with my current financial situation? Do finances cause me or us stress? If so, what does that stress do to me?

How do I feel in my family? Do I spend as much time as I would like with them? If I could change things within my family, what would that be? How does my family make me feel about myself? Is this a place of safety and love for me?

What are the relationships like in my life? When I think about friends, extended family, co-workers or community, what do I think about? Is this something I want more of or less of? Do I feel fulfilled in this area of my life? How do my relationships with others affect me as a person?

What is my relationship with technology? How do I feel about this? Am I addicted to my phone or computer? Do I often seek to escape on my devices and avoid time with my partner? Has my partner ever complained about my technology usage?

What do I feel about myself as a sexual or sensual person? Am I still interested in sex? How would I like my sex life to be? How do I show up sexually in my relationship?

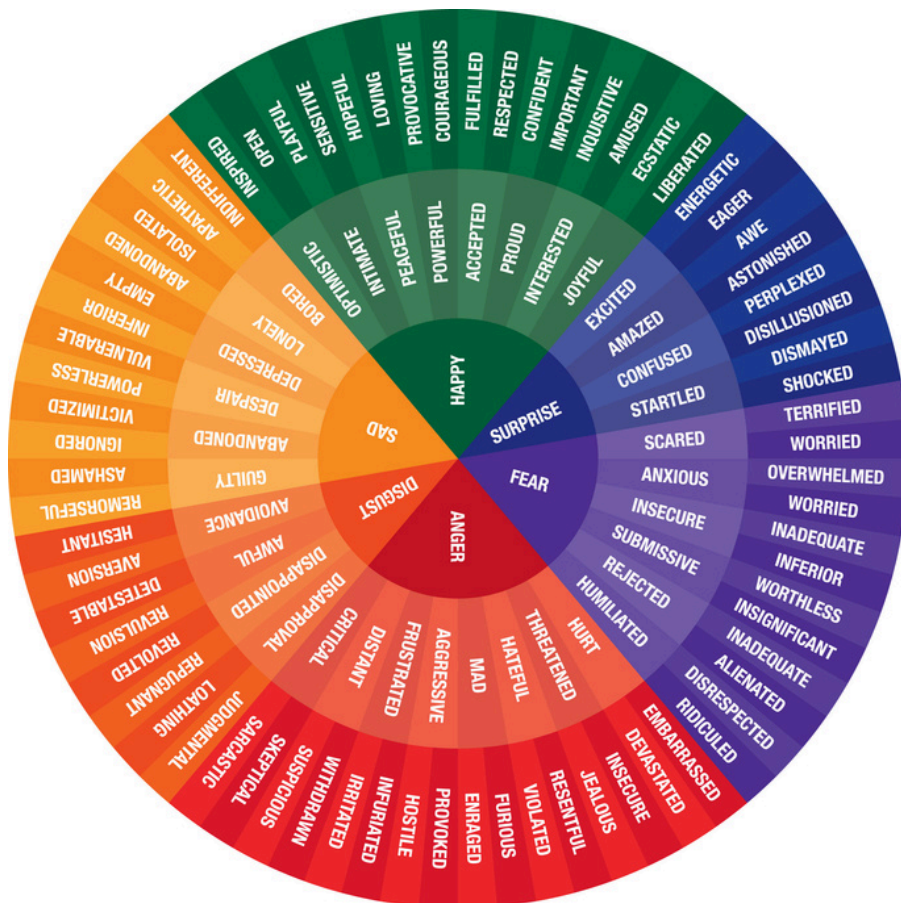
Reflections on your personal health Journal Page



IDENTIFY YOUR FEELINGS

Chances are you're experiencing a multitude of emotions connected to your partner. Some may ebb and flow, while others seem permanent. Acknowledging and embracing these feelings is essential for healing.

Typically, people tend to use only 6-8 feeling words in their daily vocabulary. However, this limited range can hinder your ability to truly understand yourself, your partner, and others on a deeper level.



Take a moment to identify how you're feeling right now. It might come naturally, or it might be a bit challenging. Acknowledging your own feelings is a crucial step in understanding them better, and help your partner attune to you. Your feelings can act as a compass, revealing what's happening around you and offer insight to how it's affecting you. By acknowledging yourself you're offering compassion and understanding, which can strengthen your resilience, ground you, clarify your thoughts, and reduce reactivity. Feel, don't think.

Feelings are transient—they come and go, they're not permanent.

Set aside 10 minutes to focus solely on feeling, not thinking. Find a quiet spot, get comfortable, and tune into your body. Notice any tightness, tension, weight, or stress. Check in with your posture—what is it telling you? Imagine turning down the volume in your mind and asking your body to speak up. Pay attention to any memories, images, or thoughts that arise, and explore your emotions surrounding them. Feel your legs, feet, ankles, spine, and neck. Listen to your breath as it flows in and out.

FEELINGS

The difference between a feeling and an emotion

An emotion is an automatic, physical reaction in the body. It can be caused by any reaction, interaction, incident or trigger. You do not choose to have an emotion; your brain triggers it instantly.

A feeling is your conscious mental interpretation and awareness of that reaction. It happens after your brain registers the physical emotion and tries to make sense of it. Two people can feel the exact same physical emotion (like a fast heartbeat), but interpret it differently as a feeling (one feels excitement, the other feels panic).

What can you do with feelings?

Emotions give you crucial information about every aspect of your world - and you can't think, reason, learn, decide, or interact without them. Understanding the feeling related to what is going on in your world allows you to decide how you want to act, react or approach the situation. When you are able to really understand what you are feeling then you can decide what to do next. When you suppress your feelings or try to avoid them, they don't go away.

They become part of the subconscious and will work their way into behaviors, actions, patterns, shame and other things until they are worked out. Learning to name them can create more peace and self confidence in your ability to handle things.

Emotion → Feeling → Naming → Acting on the information the emotion provides

How does therapy help me learn about my emotions and feelings?

The key to understanding yourself is to pause, slow down, and approach your emotions with curiosity. We move through countless feelings every day, often without giving them much thought. But sometimes, an emotion lingers, a reaction surprises us, or a familiar feeling leaves us feeling stuck. Together, we can identify what you are feeling, understand your reactions, and notice what is happening internally in different moments. As you begin to recognize your emotional patterns, you can learn more about how you manage feelings, what triggers certain responses, and how past experiences may influence the way you respond today.

We also pay attention to your body and nervous system. Are you feeling tense, anxious, overwhelmed, or disconnected? Do you notice a fight, flight, freeze, or shutdown response? These reactions can offer valuable insight into what you are experiencing and what you may need.



In this moment, what are feeling? (refer to the feelings chart if you need to)

What do you understand about where they came from or why they are there?

If you listen to your feelings, what do they need? (to vent, be heard, expressed, cried out, written out, more time spent with them, a particular action taken, solitude, etc....)

Name any feelings that you try to avoid or repress.

What do you imagine would happen if you felt them?

How do you generally handle your feelings? (ignore them, overshare, hide, get angry for having them, judge yourself, accept what they are, etc...)

What feelings are most challenging to deal with?

What feelings do you have about your partner today?

When you can identify your feelings you can communicate them.

**ASK YOURSELF: When I communicate with my partner
what are the root of my feelings based in?**

My fears, worry or doubt

Gratitude

Hopefulness or hopelessness

My family of origin

Past experiences that have hurt me

My own needs, expectations or wants

What I think they want to hear from me

Happiness, joy or love

Regularly practice this self-check-in—identify, understand their root causes, and discern your needs. Then you can enhance your ability to express yourself with clarity and empathy rather than reacting impulsively. This insight offers valuable perspective on what you want to communicate and the most effective way to do so.

CREATING SELF COMPASSION

Compassion literally means “to suffer together.” Among emotion researchers, it is defined as the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering.

At different times in life and in relationships we suffer and reflecting on how you treat yourself is as important as you treat others. Do you create space to help relieve yourself from this? This means having a genuine felt sense for yourself, almost as if you are observing yourself go through this, and offering support. Love yourself with kind words or gestures.

How to create compassion and space for yourself:



Prioritize yourself for 10-15 minutes a day (check in, relax, chill, pause)
Love yourself by using kind words, especially with your internal dialog
Build muscle memory by practicing deep breathing, sitting or standing up straight
Schedule something weekly just for you
Treat yourself with kindness (super important)
Feel the sensations in your body by tuning in more often
This is a tough time, be sensitive to all you are going through, stop criticizing yourself

You can't put your life on hold for everyone else. If you feel like you are missing out on your own happiness or joy, check in to see if you are worried about everyone else. You may actually feel defeated or out of touch with yourself because you are taking on the causes of others. By doing this you keep your schedule full, your mind racing with what's to come, try to influence what others may think of you and keep giving when you're only running on fumes. STOP! Yes, stop this. In reality you are hurting yourself and this is not sustainable. "I can't take care of myself because what will happen to everyone else?" Yes, they have needs, wants, requests and opinions, and so do you!

The moments of success are usually found when we slow down and notice things, not when we are going so fast that we can't see. Everyone will make it through this, including you. The longer you stay in this pattern, which may be your coping strategy, the further from self you grow.

Respect your inherent worth and dignity by tending to your own needs. Do you know that you are worthy and lovable? Do you know that it's okay to ask for help? Do you know that you're not weak?

Honestly, to move through different phases of life that may include dating, relationships, marriage, childbirth, parenthood, career development, aging parents, tragedy, loss or divorce means you are fairly strong and resilient. This isn't easy. I want you to understand that your life is meaningful. You are worthy of being loved. Moving into a relationship with yourself means you will have to nurture your self confidence and self esteem. This is not a grandiose narcissistic gesture, this is simply valuing your body, humanness, gifts, talents, success and the life you have.

Acknowledge the Inner Critic. We all have that loud inner voice that isn't always kind. You don't have to accept everything it says. The inner critic is rooted in something that you may not be aware of: someone else's voice, an experience, fear of failure or even self motivation. Did you ever consider that you can actually have a conversation with the inner critic to understand where it is coming from, whose voice is it and decide if you believe it? Ways to manage the inner critic:

Learn to receive a compliment
Be grateful for the effort you put into things
Let go of comparing everything you do to others
Accept Yourself as you are. (REALLY!)
Comfort the inner critic, it may be afraid, embarrassed or ashamed.



Practice self respect. This is defined as holding yourself in esteem and believing that you are good and worthy of being treated well.

Examples include: Walking away from people that are hurting you
Get in touch with who you really are
Forgive yourself of mistakes
Take good care of your body
Accept your flaws and limitations, work with them and not against them
Believe your feelings are valid and acknowledge them
Define your values and choose to live them

Get comfortable with alone time. For some this may not come naturally. You may feel lonely, nervous, anxious, afraid or simply don't know what to do with yourself. This can be an opportunity to honor yourself. It can be a time that you practice self-care, take up hobbies, catch up on reading or exercise. If you are always distracting yourself or filling up your calendar, you may be avoiding a relationship with yourself. If this is too difficult, start with small amounts of time. Plan ahead of holidays and or when your children are away.

Don't engage in toxicity. Self love and self care means you will remove yourself from toxic situations or toxic people. Being involved in this can drain your energy more quickly and make you feel bad about yourself. Make sure you feel comfortable and safe in your environment, that it is supportive.



Redefining and re-creating your life. There are often times in life where we meet new versions of ourselves or we are forced to change. When you are going through this, how do you treat yourself and how do you treat your partner? Is the other person at fault or to blame or are they a person you can lean on and trust. The changes you go through DO affect others. If you are in denial about this and keep telling yourself “I can handle it. I can do this alone” then you are not only isolating yourself from your partner, you are not giving them the benefit of being there for you.

If you are struggling, try to visualize whatever is present as an opportunity to fully embrace who you are. Fall in love with yourself and see the potential that lies ahead. Allow yourself to think big, even if you can't do it all. Imagine hobbies, friendships, relationships, goals or things you put off for years. I hope you relish in the chance to make this difficult transition a very positive life experience.

Seek stability. Find something that makes you feel anchored and stabilized, so when you have those really hard days it doesn't feel like you're drowning.

Ways to Stabilize Yourself

Keep a journal

It's ok to only write a few sentences, draw, scribble or jot down words. Journaling doesn't have to be a long process with pages of feelings.

Take breaks when you need them, don't power through life or feelings.

This is very important for emotional regulation.

Sit on the floor and close your eyes until the feelings pass

Centering yourself in the present moment helps the brain and body come back to homeostasis. Focus on something that is in your control.

EX: I can focus on something that brings me joy

Get enough sleep

If you are tired during the day and can feel the energy draining, find 10-15 minutes to lay down and close your eyes.

Use your lifeline and call a friend

Confide in someone about what you are going through. Agree that it is okay to call them if you need someone to lean on.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is the cornerstone of any healthy relationship, and its absence often leads to conflict. Difficulty in expressing oneself and feeling misunderstood by a partner can strain even the strongest relationships. At one point, you likely couldn't wait to share your joys, dreams, and daily experiences with each other. However, as time passes, dynamics can shift.

So, where do you begin?

Your relationship will become more manageable when you establish a clear plan, set expectations, and communicate intentions effectively. Clarifying these aspects lays a foundation for smoother communication and a stronger connection with your partner.



What is currently working in your communication? (tone, frequency, method of communicating, agreeing on the things, absolutely nothing)

What do consider are your strengths in communicating?

What is hurtful or difficult about the communication with your partner?

How would you describe the boundaries in your relationship? (your closed off, anything goes, you want them but aren't sure how to have them)

The Communication Cycle

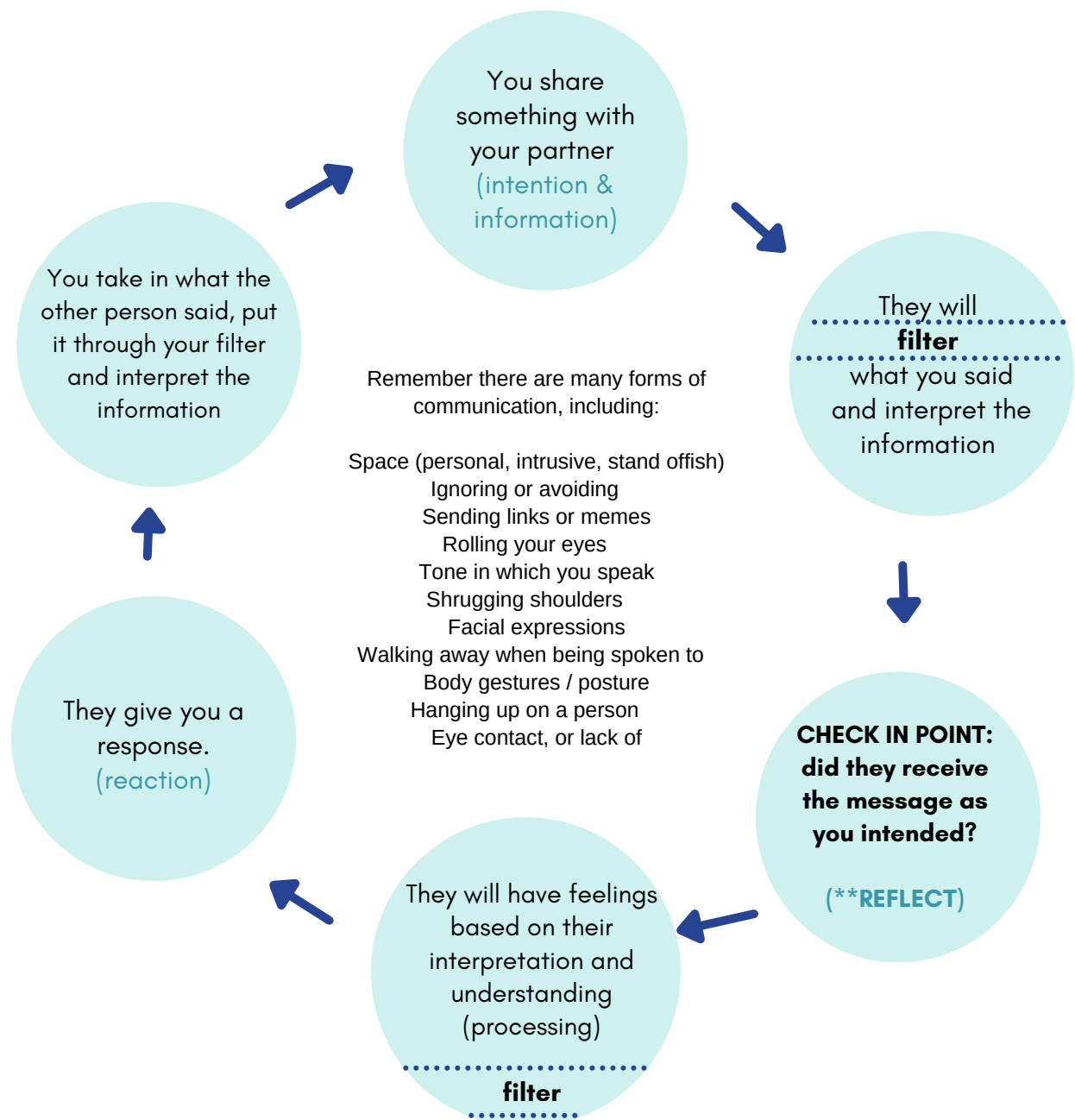
At every stage of communication, there's potential for misunderstanding. We all have unique filters shaped by upbringing, experiences, fears, hopes, and more. Staying mindful and present, rather than succumbing to judgment, allows for genuine connection. From this grounded place, addressing needs or concerns as they arise becomes more feasible.

Relationships shape the quality of our lives, and the quality of our conversations shapes our relationships. Don't leave communication to mind reading.

But here's the catch: through your filter, you interpret what your partner says. But is it accurate?

In the communication cycle, there's a critical juncture: CHECK AND REFLECT.

This step invites you to pause, consider your interpretation, and reflect on whether it aligns with what was intended. It's a pivotal moment for clarifying understanding and fostering genuine connection.



What isn't communicated is felt. What is felt is interpreted and what is interpreted is often inaccurate. Be as clear as possible, pausing to make sure you both feel understood.

When you Keep Pushing

I keep trying to make a point, push an agenda or won't back down



PAUSE:
I am feeling _____
about this situation



What am I doing to help regulate this feeling?
(talking to others, re-evaluating the situation, deep breaths, validating my feelings)



What is the belief or situation that is supporting the feeling I have?

What's the value in pushing them?



How can I find resolution or accept the feeling in order to communicate more effectively without pushing my partner?



What topics or issues do I seem to "push" on?

What feeling is underneath this?

How can I share this without being pushy or insistent?

How do I feel when my partner keeps pushing or pressuring me?

Communication Cycle: Reflective Listening

REFLECTIVE LISTENING (THE CHECK IN POINT) is an active way to reduce misinterpretations. It takes a few seconds longer but is worth the effort. A fundamental need of a person is to feel heard and validated. Communication is BOTH talking and listening.

Reflective listening is restating what the other person said in a neutral way.
This happens BEFORE you share your response.

The goal is to prevent outbursts, defensiveness or feeling misunderstood. This will help you respond in a more calm, neutral way.

In a calm tone, reflect back what you heard the other person say. Try to use their words as much as possible. You are seeking to understand, not offer a solution. It's important to notice how you interpret their communication through your filter.

1. Ask, "Did I hear you correctly? Is there anything I missed?" "Do you feel like I understand?" "Is there anything else to add to this?" It's easier to communicate see things similarly and interpret the communication the way it was intended. If there is more to add or change, this is the time for you to listen to the clarification.
2. Don't get upset with each other if it takes a few times to understand one another. This step is very valuable in the long term as well, in building trust, reliability and consistency.
3. Notice what feelings are coming up for you. This is the time you need to be emotionally aware so you can monitor your response and regulate as necessary. Your feelings inform you of the impact of the information.
4. Once you understand the information being shared and how you feel about it, pause to consider your response. Don't quickly react, especially if communication is a struggle for you. Take your time here, it's worth it.

Remember that reflecting is NOT trying to convince the other person of what you are saying, asking for agreement or challenging the other person. It is simply verifying that you understand the intention and meaning of what they said. As the conversation continues you can share your thoughts and the impact.



Managing Conflict and Mood Regulation

Most conflict involves a difference of perception

Let's check in with your beliefs, narrative and behaviors when it comes to conflict, disagreements or strife.

1. Honestly, how does my own behavior impact this relationship?
2. When I feel there is conflict, my usual ways of dealing with it are:
3. How do I regulate myself so we can have a productive or collaborative conversation? What internal resources, strengths or sense of self can I rely on?
4. My narrative or story about conflict is:
5. How do I want to be treated when there is a disagreement, misalignment or confusion?
7. How am I expecting my partner to behave or react to me when I am upset?
8. What reactions or behaviors do I feel could be better when there is conflict?
9. How was conflict or differences handled in my home as a child?

Tips for Managing Conflict

Stay on task

Remind yourself what the conversation is about and don't deviate. Especially if you are being triggered, talked down to, prodded or activated somehow, keep the conversation focused. The both of you can decide on a later time to talk about the other issues if there are tangents. I know this can be difficult because there's so much to say, however learning to focus on what the immediate topic is will serve the relationship, and give you time to calm down.

- It is absolutely OKAY to tell your partner you want some time to regulate or need a break.
- Respect if your partner is being flooded with emotions and don't try to push them further.
- Kindly ask each other if they feel there is completion or closure before moving on to the next topic.

Create self-awareness around what you are feeling.

Acknowledging your emotions is crucial for self-awareness. Ignoring them won't make them disappear; they'll manifest in harmful ways like aggression, criticism, or impatience.

Before you react, take a moment to reflect.

Some things fly out of our mouths so easily because of hurt, repressed feelings, annoyance or for a myriad of other reasons. PAUSE and ask yourself, **do you want to react or do you want to respond?** Use this time to reflect on your feelings and make a choice about how you want to react. This might take minutes, hours, or days. By doing this, you create space to assess and respond thoughtfully, interrupting the conflict and nurturing self-awareness.

Say your feelings aloud

Hearing my thoughts internally is comforting and familiar. Yet, speaking them aloud can offer a fresh perspective. It releases thoughts from internal dialogue, allowing for clearer understanding and emotional regulation. It may have more of a charge, less of a charge, you may feel compassionate, think it's not a big deal or hear yourself and realize that whatever it is, it's important or not. The goal remains gaining clarity on emotions.

Stop trying to convince your partner of something if they don't agree with

In relationships, conflicts often revolve around each person trying to convince the other of their viewpoint. These attempts to gain agreement create a cyclical pattern of arguments, leading to emotional exhaustion and unresolved tension and resentment. This cycle of convincing turns communication into a battlefield, where each person is entrenched in their positions, defending their viewpoints, and trying to 'win' the argument.

Don't weaponize sensitive or meaningful knowledge

When your partner shares vulnerabilities or intimate details, refrain from weaponizing them in conflict. Doing so erodes trust and safety rapidly, transforming you into a threat. Consequently, your partner may close off, protecting themselves from further harm, hindering openness and trust in the relationship.

Take all mind reading off the table

You really may want your partner "to know" and get frustrated if they don't, but it's not fair to ask them to read your mind. Communicating your thoughts, ideas and expectations sets you both up for success.

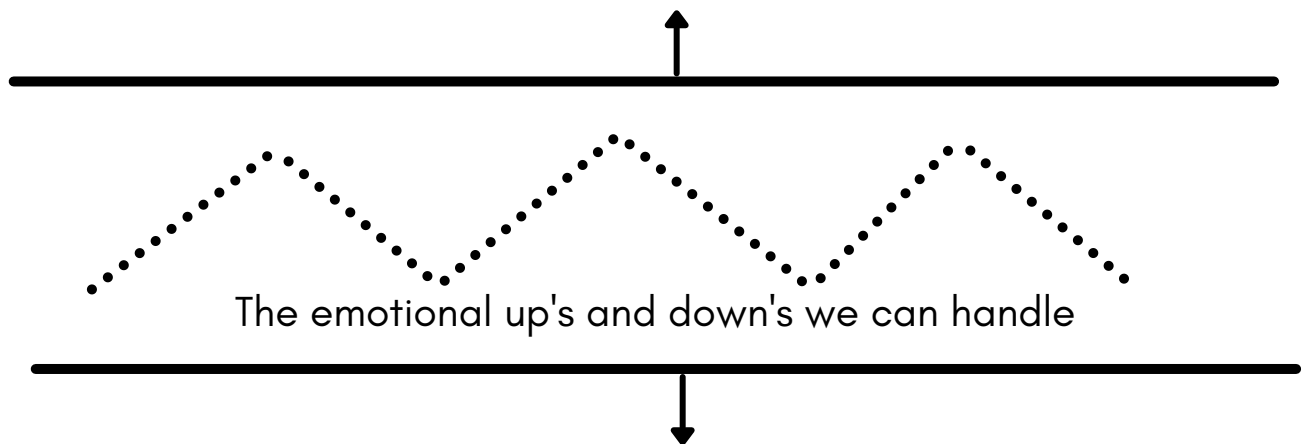
Self Reflections on Managing Conflict
What have I learned about myself and my partner?

Mood Regulation: Understanding your window of tolerance

Within each of us, we have a certain amount of emotional space where we can tolerate what's happening in our environment. We can handle an ebb and flow of comfortable and uncomfortable feelings without having a strong reaction. When our environment starts pushing us outside this space, we can go into hypo-arousal or hyper-arousal. Our brain begins processing things differently, we feel out of sorts and various hormones such as cortisol or adrenaline start being released in the system.

If you are pushing your co-parent outside their window of tolerance then you can't expect them not to have a reaction. Inversely, if you are being pushed then it will be important to know when to end the conversation and take care of yourself.

Out of my window. I may get very angry, have outburst, yell, get agitated, or lose control over my emotions. There is a limited amount of self control once this happens and it may take a while to calm down. The nervous system is in overdrive.



Out of my window. I want to give up! The tank is empty, I have nothing left to offer you, I am depleted and worn out. In this space I retreat. Often feeling this way leads to depression, low energy, intrusive thoughts or numbness.

Have you ever felt this "push" coming on, when your senses are being heightened and you are slowly moving from emotional regulation to either out of control or completely defeated? This is what's happening.

A reaction in either direction can be triggered by traumatic experiences, ongoing PTSD, feeling threatened, attacked or there is a sense of danger.

In your relationship, please be aware of how your words and actions are affect one another. Very little can be accomplished if you are communicating outside the window of tolerance.

Blaming vs. Cooperative Statements

THIS: Use "I" statements that are not blaming	NOT "You" statements can cause defensiveness
I am frustrated about the schedule as well, how can we find a solution?	You are always changing the schedule and it make me mad.
I would like to understand why you didn't do the chores I asked you to do.	Once again, you don't do anything I ask.
I would like you to consider taking the dog for a walk before dinner so we can have some quality time afterwards.	You seem to like the dog more than me, because I don't see you trying to hang out after dinner.
I was upset when you didn't take the kids gear to practice but left it for me to pick up. It made me late for work and I got panicked.	What were you thinking? I was late to work because you didn't take their gear. Get it together!
I would like it if we can find another time for us to go on vacation, I am worried about finances and want to get my bonus first.	We always have to take vacations when you want to. When are you going to think about how much it costs instead leaving it up to me?
I know we have different sexual libidos. I am trying to be considerate of what you want and am thinking about it more than you probably are aware of.	I am so tired of you making me feel bad for not wanting to have sex. It doesn't mean I don't love you so stop putting your stuff on me.
Your own example:	
Your own example:	

Building Trust and Emotional Safety

Emotional safety and trust form the bedrock of any healthy and fulfilling relationship. They provide the necessary foundation for intimacy, vulnerability, and growth. When partners feel emotionally safe and trusting, they can truly be themselves without fear of judgment or rejection.

One of the key components of emotional safety is the belief that your partner cares about your emotional well-being. This means feeling confident that your partner will respond to your feelings with empathy, understanding, and support. It involves creating an environment where both partners feel comfortable expressing their emotions, whether they are positive or negative, without the fear of being dismissed or invalidated.

Trust is equally essential in maintaining emotional safety. Trust entails having confidence in your partner's reliability, honesty, and integrity. It means believing that your partner will keep their commitments, respect your boundaries, and prioritize the relationship. Trust allows for vulnerability because it provides a sense of security in knowing that you can rely on your partner to be there for you through thick and thin.

In a relationship where emotional safety and trust thrive, partners can freely share their hopes, fears, vulnerabilities, and pain. They can open up about their deepest desires and insecurities without reservation, knowing that their partner will listen with warmth and concern. This level of intimacy fosters deeper connections and strengthens the bond between partners.

Conversely, when emotional safety and trust are lacking, relationships can become strained and tumultuous. Without feeling secure in expressing themselves, individuals may withdraw emotionally or resort to defensive behaviors, leading to communication breakdowns and resentment.

Therefore, it's crucial for partners to actively cultivate emotional safety and trust in their relationship. This requires consistent effort, communication, and a willingness to be vulnerable with one another.

Building trust takes time and patience, but the rewards of a deeply fulfilling and connected relationship are well worth the investment. **By prioritizing emotional safety and trust, couples can create a strong foundation upon which their love can flourish and endure.**

- Be respectful with your tone and your words
- Show consistency in care and repair
- Ask your partner how they are feeling, and truly listen
- Make time for your relationship; demonstrate it's a priority
- Do not weaponize feelings or vulnerable moments against them
- Find gentle or kind ways to reveal your disappointment
- Don't be critical and expect people to change. That perpetuates defensiveness
- Do not lie or mislead your partner
- Celebrate your partner and express care, love and interest

Let's Explore

To me, trust means:

I trust you in these ways:

When you do _____ it builds my trust in you.

When you do _____ it erodes my trust in you.

What things can I do to help you feel secure and safe with me?

What parts of me are afraid to reveal themselves?

When I say I want to be closer to you, that means:

Growing up, what did I learn or how did I learn about emotional safety?

How does this affect me now?

How do I feel about vulnerability?

Self Reflections on building trust and safety
What have I learned about myself and my partner?

Relationship Therapy At Whole Health Counseling Center

Most couples get into trouble because they never learned the tools and skills necessary for making a long-term relationship successful. Relationship therapy in San Francisco, CA is where those skills get built. Imagine how much better your life could be if you could see yourself and your partner through the eyes of compassion.

We believe the power of connection, trust, honesty, and safety are the key foundations of a healthy and thriving relationship. Whether you're dating, engaged, or have been together for years, relationships take work. Our couples counseling in San Francisco, CA and our pre-marital sessions help partners strengthen communication, rebuild trust, and grow closer.

How Couples Counseling Can Support You

If you feel stuck or disconnected and are willing to show up, communicate openly, and you believe that change is possible then you can benefit greatly from therapy. We understand it takes work, but the investment could give you a stronger foundation going forward.

- Communicate more effectively & create positive life patterns
- Work through disagreements or differences
- Learn how to identify one's needs and share those needs with the other
- Create safety together, building authenticity
- Let go of the past, and forgive, grow, and cultivate into something new together
- Empathetic listening vs. defensive listening
- Understand positive and negative communication cycles
- Deal with hurt and disappointment with one's partner
- Explore emotional and practical needs, what those needs are for each individual, how to ask for them, and how to recognize others' needs.
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- Understand and explore the lack of romantic or sexual feelings in your relationship
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CONTACT US TODAY! We have a great team of therapists ready to work with you.

415-275-1855

Fill out an intake form online: www.wholehealthcounselingcenter.com