The Marriage Mirror

Action Deck

Positive Speaking Skills

that Erase Negative Habits

Small Changes. Deep Connection.

be kind

"Perhaps you will forget tomorrow the kind words you say today, but the recipient may cherish them over a lifetime."

- Dale Carnegie

"Kind words are like honey – sweet to the soul and healthy for the body." *(Proverbs 16:24)*

POSITIVE SPEAKING SKILLS

1. I will clearly communicate that I like to talk with my partner.
2. I will compliment my partner often.
3. I will express disagreement without turning my partner off.
4. If I criticize my partner, I will focus on the issue and avoid any sense of superiority.
5. I will be direct and honest instead of dancing around an issue.
6. I will not bring up the past when dealing with a present situation.

POSITIVE SPEAKING SKILLS

7. I will ask my partner for feedback to ensure that the message I sent was accurately understood.
8. When negotiating, I will speak in a manner that encourages cooperation.
9. I will avoid trigger words and nonverbal cues that will unnecessarily evoke a negative response.
10. I will think about what I am going to say before I speak.
11. I will remain cordial and respectful of my partner even if we disagree over what was said.
12. I will share freely with my partner, trusting that what I share will be kept confidential.

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

1 I will clearly communicate that I like to talk with my partner.

💡 **HINT:** Mastering this skill isn't about words or telepathy; it's about tangible signals and intentional space… that flash of genuine delight when your eyes meet… your warm radiant smile during shared moments… conscious efforts to spend time together. These are all potent non-verbal declarations of your heart.

👣 **HOW:** Invite connection: "I've been looking forward to catching up with you." Initiate check-ins when there is no "problem" to solve. Ask follow-up questions. Set a daily "Connect with [Partner]" alarm.

🔍 **RESULT:** My partner looks more relaxed when we talk. Conversations feel less like "business" and more like "connection." There is a visible warmth between us.

⭐ **SOUL:** *"…People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." "When your kid [/spouse] walks in the room, does your face light up? That's what they're looking for." (Maya Angelou)*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

1 Supporting my partner's desire to talk

🔍 Notice them saying "I really enjoy talking with you" or enthusiastically engaging in a conversation through smiles, follow-up questions, and focused attention.

Partner Affirmation Examples

💖 *You seemed to really engage with what I was saying today. Seeing that you truly like talking with me makes me feel so valued and loved!*

💖 *I noticed how you [specific action, e.g., put your phone away/smiled] when I started talking; it clearly showed me you enjoy our time together.*

💖 *It made me feel so [feeling] when you told me you enjoyed our talk about [topic].*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

2 I will compliment my partner often.

💡 **HINT:** The more specific a compliment, the more sincere it will appear. While general praise is kind, focusing on particular qualities, actions, or details demonstrates genuine observation and appreciation. Sincerity is key; make sure your compliments reflect your true feelings.

👣 **HOW:** Keep a "Gratitude Log." Share one compliment via text during the work day, and one in person before bed. Commit to the "60-second Rule": say the nice thought out loud within one minute of thinking it.

🔍 **RESULT:** I notice the small things. I give at least one specific, character-based compliment daily (e.g., "I love how patient you were today").

⭐ **SOUL:** *"I can live for two months on a good compliment" (Mark Twain).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

2 Supporting my partner as they compliment me

🔍 Listen for specific, frequent compliments about your character or actions.

Partner Affirmation Examples

💖 *That compliment you gave me earlier really made my day. Thank you for noticing me.*

💖 *I've been thinking about that sweet thing you said about me earlier. Thank you for being my biggest cheerleader.*

💖 *When you complimented me on [action], I felt so [feeling, e.g. respected, supported, cherished, seen, appreciated].*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

3 I will express disagreement without turning my partner off.

💡 **HINT:** To express disagreement without pressing your partner's buttons, it is often helpful to first discover what you agree on. Then use "I" statements to frame your concerns as your own feelings without placing blame, truly listen to their perspective, and maintain a calm, respectful voice.

👣 **HOW:** Script the XYZ Formula: "When X happened, I felt Y, and I need Z." Lead with a positive. Commit to "I" statements (my experience) and strictly avoid starting with "You" (blame). Aim to solve a problem, not win an argument.

🔍 **RESULT:** We sustain the conversation for 10+ minutes without anger or "walls" (withdrawal/ stonewalling). We preserve the relationship "Covenant" even during conflict.

⭐ **SOUL:** *"The secret of negotiation is to harmonize the real interests of the parties concerned" (Francois de Callieres).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

3 Supporting my partner's respectful disagreement.

🔍 Notice them stating a different opinion without using a harsh or dismissive tone.

Partner Affirmation Examples

❤️ *I noticed how you shared your disagreement without being pushy. I felt safe hearing your side.*

❤️ *I really value how you share your opinions so kindly, even when they're different from mine. It makes it so much easier for us to grow together.*

❤️ *I appreciated that you disagreed about [topic] without making me feel [emotion].*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

4 If I criticize my partner, I will focus on the issue and avoid any sense of superiority.

💡 **HINT:** Remember, the goal is to resolve the problem, not to establish dominance. Address specific behaviors, not character. Frame critiques as preferences or requests, not absolute truths. Maintain a respectful tone that invites collaboration, not defensiveness.

👣 **HOW:** Block your "Me vs. You" impulse by mentally moving to the same side of the table as your spouse, facing the issue together. Change "Why don't YOU...?" (triggers defensiveness) to "How can WE...?" (invites a solution).

🔍 **RESULT:** I talk about a specific "behavior" rather than their "character." My partner remains engaged in problem-solving rather than withdrawing in shame.

⭐ **SOUL:** *"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

4 Supporting my partner's focus on the issue.

🔍 Notice. Listen for them criticizing the problem or a specific behavior rather than you or your personality.

Partner Affirmation Examples

❤️ *Thank you for bringing up that issue so kindly without acting like you're "above" me.*

❤️ *Thank you for the way you brought up that tough topic. You did it with so much grace and zero judgment, and I really heard you.*

❤️ *Thank you for focusing only on [issue] just now. It helped me stay [feeling].*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

5 I will be direct and honest instead of dancing around an issue.

💡 **HINT:** While the desire to avoid conflict is natural, directness solves more problems. Identify your core message. Then, practice stating it clearly and concisely, using "I" statements to express your feelings and needs. Remember, being direct doesn't mean being harsh; it's about being clear and respectful.

👣 **HOW:** Write down my main point before the talk so I don't get lost in words. State my specific "Ask" in the first two sentences. Eliminate passive-aggressive hints, "tests," or hoping my partner will "just figure it out." Say: "I have a specific need I'd like to share."

🔍 **RESULT:** I am clear and kind, not "dancing around" the point. The conversation is focused and shorter because the goal is clear.

⭐ **SOUL:** *"Love should always make us tell the truth" (Ephesians 4:15 CEV). "Speak the truth, even if your voice shakes" (Unknown).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

5 Supporting my partner's direct and honest speech.

🔍 Notice them bringing up a concern directly instead of hinting or being passive-aggressive.

Partner Affirmation Examples

❤️ *I appreciate you being direct and honest with me and not making me guess what was wrong.*

❤️ *I love how honest and direct you are with me. I never have to guess where I stand with you, and that honesty is so refreshing.*

❤️ *I value you being so direct and honest about [topic]. It makes me feel [feeling] in our marriage.*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

6 I will not bring up the past when dealing with a present situation.

💡 **HINT:** The present demands your full attention. Any detour into old grievances shifts the focus from problem-solving to blame and retaliation. Ask yourself, "What can I do NOW to resolve this situation?" If past issues need to be dealt with, consider setting aside dedicated time to address them separately.

👣 **HOW:** Focus exclusively on the "Current Receipt." Tell myself: "That memory is for a different talk; today we stay focused on fixing the current issue." Commit to solving today's problem rather than re-litigating yesterday's.

🔍 **RESULT:** We stay on one topic for the duration of the talk. I don't mention mistakes from weeks or months ago. I am actively looking for a solution for today.

⭐ **SOUL:** *"Love does not keep a record of wrongs" (1 Corinthians 13:5 CSB).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

6 Supporting my partner as they leave the past behind

🔍 Notice them sticking only to the present situation without bringing up old mistakes.

Partner Affirmation Examples

❤️ *Thank you for staying focused on today and not bringing up the past. It made this so much easier to solve.*

❤️ *It meant a lot to me that we stayed focused on the present today. It feels like we're building a new future instead of dragging around the past.*

❤️ *I felt so [feeling] that you didn't bring up the past while we talked about [topic] today.*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

7 I will ask my partner for feedback to ensure that the message I sent was accurately understood.

💡 **HINT:** When requesting feedback, communicate receptivity with your tone of voice, facial expression and posture.

👣 **HOW:** Pause for a "recap" after an important request. Ask: "To make sure I was clear, what did you hear me ask for?" Inquire about the emotional impact by asking: "Did that land okay, or did I say it too harshly?"

🔍 **RESULT:** I value my partner's perception of my message as much as the message itself. We both leave the conversation with the same "mental map" of what was agreed upon.

⭐ **SOUL:** *"We all need people who will give us feedback. That's how we improve" (Bill Gates). "The meaning of your communication is the response you get" (NLP tenet).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

7 Supporting my partner as they ask for feedback

🔍 Notice your partner checking for alignment and asking for feedback rather than assuming you understood what they meant.

Partner Affirmation Examples

❤️ *I loved that you asked me for feedback to make sure I understood you correctly. It kept us on the same page and made me feel like we're a team.*

❤️ *Thank you for checking in to make sure I understood what you were saying. It makes me feel like a true partner in our communication.*

❤️ *When you asked if I understood [topic], it made me feel safe to ask for clarification without feeling "wrong." Thank you for that.*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

8 When negotiating, I will speak in a manner that encourages cooperation.

💡 **HINT:** Negotiation is about finding mutually acceptable solutions, not winning at all costs. Instead of "I need" or "you should," try "we could" or "let's explore." Ask clarifying questions. Find common ground. Avoid accusatory language. Maintain a calm and respectful tone. Be open to compromise.

👣 **HOW:** Frame requests as invitations using phrases like: "How would you feel about [X]?" Brainstorm two solutions and then ask for my partner's third option. Seek "Buy-in" and partnership rather than demanding compliance or obedience.

🔍 **RESULT:** I use "We/Our" language instead of "I/You." I ask: "What are your thoughts on how we can fix this together?" I notice my partner offering ideas rather than just nodding.

⭐ **SOUL:** *"Your speech should always be gracious and sprinkled with insight so that you may know how to respond to every person" (Colossians 4:6 CEB).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

8 Supporting my partner's cooperative negotiation.

🔍 Notice them using a tone that invites you to find a solution together.

Partner Affirmation Examples

❤️ *I caught ya using a "we" tone while we negotiated. It made me want to work with you, not against you.*

❤️ *The way you spoke to me during our "negotiation" made me feel like we were on the same team. I love tackling life with you.*

❤️ *The way you talked about [decision] made me feel like we are working toward [goal] together.*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

9 I will avoid trigger words and nonverbal cues that will unnecessarily evoke a negative response.

💡 **HINT:** Work together to create a discreet "safe word" or signal that can be used to indicate when you feel triggered, offended, or overwhelmed, before the conversation escalates. When the safe word/signal is used, allow for a pause or change in approach.

👣 **HOW:** Identify my partner's "Top 3 Triggers" and ban them from my vocabulary entirely. Take a 5-second breath and then plainly state my underlying emotion instead of making a "clever" sarcastic comment.

🔍 **RESULT:** There is a total absence of sarcasm, eye-rolling, or sighing during our talks. My tone stays warm and respectful even when the talk is difficult.

⭐ **SOUL:** *"The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives" (Tony Robbins). "Let no harmful word come out of your mouth, but only what is beneficial for building others up according to the need, so that it gives grace to those who hear it" (Ephesians 4:29 TLV).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

9 Supporting my partner's use of safe words/cues

🔍 Notice them avoiding words or gestures they know typically upset you.

Partner Affirmation Examples

❤️ *I noticed you pausing and choosing your words carefully earlier. Thank you for being so thoughtful and protecting our connection in that moment.*

❤️ *Thank you for being mindful of my triggers today. Seeing you work to keep things peaceful makes me feel safe to keep opening up to you.*

❤️ *I noticed you were very intentional about your tone/gestures today; thank you for being so thoughtful and protecting our connection. It helped me stay/feel [feeling, e.g., calm/ engaged].*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

10 I will think about what I am going to say before I speak.

💡 **HINT:** Ask yourself: What is the goal of my communication? How might my words affect my partner? Are my intended words clear, respectful, and constructive? Do I fully understand my partner's perspective? Is this the right moment to have this conversation?

👣 **HOW:** Apply the T.H.I.N.K. method: Is it True, Helpful, Inspiring, Necessary, Kind? Take a mandatory 5-second pause to let my "logical brain" catch up to my "emotional brain."

🔍 **RESULT:** My words are intentional and measured. I no longer "shoot from the hip" or find myself constantly apologizing for a tone or statement made in the heat of the moment.

⭐ **SOUL:** *"The heart of the righteous considers how to answer" (Proverbs 15:28 NET). "Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another" (Napoleon Hill).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

10 Supporting my partner's thoughtful speech

🔍 Look for them pausing to think before they respond to you.

Partner Affirmation Examples

❤️ *I could tell you really thought about your words before you spoke. Your thoughtfulness means a lot.*

❤️ *I can tell how much thought you've been putting into your words lately. It makes me feel incredibly respected and valued.*

❤️ *I could tell you were really thinking before you spoke about [topic]. It made me feel [feeling].*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

11 I will remain cordial and respectful of my partner even if we disagree over what was said.

💡 **HINT:** Pay attention to your tone of voice, words, and body language. Instead of focusing on who is "right" or "wrong," prioritize finding common ground and expressing your differing views with empathy and understanding. Suggest a break if needed.

👣 **HOW:** Agree on a "time-out" signal. Commit to taking a break for at least 20 minutes if I can no longer stay respectful. Maintain a "living room" volume and continue to use basic manners (Please/Thank you) even when I am frustrated.

🔍 **RESULT:** My volume remains steady. I no longer use "the cold shoulder" or name-calling. I can state, "I disagree with you, but I still love and respect you."

⭐ **SOUL:** *"A gentle answer turns away wrath. But a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs. 15:1 NASB). "Respect is a two-way street. If you want to get it, you've got to give it" (R.G. Risch). "The art of disagreeing without being disagreeable" (Mahatma Gandhi).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

11 Supporting my partner's respectful cordiality.

🔍 Notice them remaining kind and polite even when you disagree.

Partner Affirmation Examples

❤️ *Even though we disagreed, you stayed so cordial and respectful. I'm proud of how we handled that.*

❤️ *I'm so proud of us. Even though we didn't agree, you stayed so respectful. It proves our love is bigger than our differences.*

❤️ *Even though we don't agree on [topic], you stayed so respectful. Thank you. It makes me feel [feeling].*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SKILL CARD | SPEAKING

12 I will share freely with my partner, trusting that what I share will be kept confidential.

💡 **HINT:** Trust grows through small, consistent steps. By calmly sharing your concerns & fears, you create a safe sanctuary for vulnerability and deep connection.

👣 **HOW:** Commit to being an "open book." Start with "small vulnerabilities" to incrementally rebuild transparency and trust. Clearly state your need for sensitivity and confidentiality: "I need to know this is safe with you—both inside and outside of this house."

🔍 **RESULT:** I share my secrets, fears, and dreams without filtering or "rehearsing." I no longer feel the need to "edit" my heart before speaking. I am the first to tell my partner my news, good or bad.

⭐ **SOUL:** *"Vulnerability is not weakness. It's our most accurate measure of courage" (Brené Brown). "Trust is the fruit of a relationship in which you know you are loved" (William P. Young). "To share your weakness is to make yourself vulnerable; to make yourself vulnerable is to show your strength" (Criss Jami).*

MARRIAGE MIRROR SUPPORT CARD | SPEAKING

12 Supporting my partner's trust and confidentiality

🔍 Notice them sharing something deep and private with you, trusting you to keep it safe.

Partner Affirmation Examples

❤️ *Thank you for trusting me with what you shared. I want you to know that your heart is safe with me and I will keep this strictly between us.*

❤️ *I'm so honored that you chose to share that with me today. It makes me feel closer to you knowing you trust me to be your safe place.*

❤️ *I noticed how much courage it took to tell me [topic]. Thank you for trusting me with the private parts of your heart; I value that trust more than anything.*