



The Marriage Mirror

ATTENDEE

WORKSHEETS

www.marriagemirror.com

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Disclaimer: THE MARRIAGE MIRROR™ Workbook is an educational resource designed to improve communication and relationships. It is not intended to serve as a substitute for professional counseling, therapy, or medical advice. If you or your partner are experiencing serious relationship issues or mental health concerns, please consult a licensed professional.

Introduction to The Marriage Mirror™

Developed by Arthur K. Robertson, Ph.D.

The Marriage Mirror was born out of the deep concern of its founder, Arthur K. Robertson, Ph.D., over the declining rate of successful marriages. Early in his career as a Senior Pastor, he witnessed too many divorces among couples he had married, leading him to ask: “**What is it that makes marriages work?**” He discontinued performing ceremonies in 1975 to focus on this question.

Robertson concluded that the root of all major marital issues—including sexual dysfunction, money conflicts, and problems with children—was fundamentally **poor communication**.

To develop a solution, Robertson secured fifty years of research on effective listening from Dr. Lyman K. Steil, the “International Ambassador of Listening.” This deep research was coupled with Robertson's own experience as a corporate consultant. His core methodology, which includes a statistically proven listening inventory, showed effectiveness in retest analyses of thousands of professionals.

Across his listening workshops, a clear pattern emerged: the vast majority of managers prioritized improving communication with their spouse over communication with their colleagues. This powerful revelation fueled the creation of THE MARRIAGE MIRROR™.

Initially designed as an over-the-counter resource for couples, the program was later modified for use on the Internet, making its powerful, research-backed methodology accessible everywhere. As Dr. Robertson explains, the entire program is designed to build a rock-solid marriage upon three foundational communication pillars that are taught and reinforced throughout the course:

1. **Listening:** Discover how you listen to each other and build an effective listening plan.
2. **Speaking:** Learn how to talk with one another and build a better speaking plan.
3. **Environment:** Understand the key role your environment plays in important discussions.

A Space for Honest Connection

This workshop is your shared space to reflect, connect, and practice. Your facilitator will guide you through an enjoyable process that will build your marriage, pausing the screen whenever it is time to turn your attention to these pages.

As you complete these worksheets, you aren't just filling out forms—you are holding up a mirror to your relationship, breaking old patterns, and intentionally building a communication framework that will protect your marriage for a lifetime. Writing out your thoughts is a statistically proven way to turn intentions into lasting action steps. God bless you as you proceed!

<p style="text-align: center;">Listening – Assessment of Self <i>(How I perceive my own listening habits)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">5 = ALMOST ALWAYS; 4 = USUALLY; 3 = SOMETIMES; 2 = SELDOM; 1 = ALMOST NEVER</p>		NAME:				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I can sense when my partner is emotionally upset.					
2	Even when I am excited or upset, I can focus on my partner and listen.					
3	When my partner speaks, I give my undivided attention.					
4	I pay more attention to what my partner means than to how the message is conveyed.					
5	I ask questions to clarify what I do not understand.					
6	I listen for my partner's main ideas rather than getting lost in the details.					
7	I look for something of value in what my partner says even if I don't agree with everything.					
8	I wait without interrupting until my partner is through, then pause, think and respond.					
9	I communicate an understanding of my partner's thoughts and feelings before stating a contrary opinion.					
10	I do not change the subject until either my partner is finished or we have agreed to change the subject.					
11	When my partner criticizes me, I recognize and admit to anything that is true.					
12	In conversations with my partner, I listen more than speak.					
13	I observe my partner's facial expressions (without staring) while my partner speaks.					
14	I notice the nonverbal messages given by my partner's body language and physical cues.					
Subtotal each column						
Total Score						

<p style="text-align: center;">Listening – Assessment of Partner <i>(How I perceive my partner’s listening habits)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">5 = ALMOST ALWAYS; 4 = USUALLY; 3 = SOMETIMES; 2 = SELDOM; 1 = ALMOST NEVER</p>		NAME:				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	My partner can sense when I am emotionally upset.					
2	My partner can focus and listen to me even when my partner is excited or emotionally upset.					
3	When I am speaking my partner gives me undivided attention.					
4	My partner pays more attention to what I mean than to how I convey it.					
5	My partner asks questions to clarify what is not understood.					
6	My partner listens for my main ideas rather than getting lost in the details.					
7	My partner looks for something of value in what I say, even if there was disagreement over some of what I said.					
8	My partner waits without interrupting until I am through, then pauses, thinks and responds.					
9	My partner communicates an understanding of my thoughts and feelings before stating a contrary opinion.					
10	My partner does not change the subject until either I am finished or we have agreed to change the subject.					
11	When criticized, my partner is able to recognize and admit to anything that is true.					
12	In conversations with me, my partner listens more than speaks.					
13	My partner observes my facial expressions (without staring) while I speak.					
14	My partner notices the nonverbal messages given by my body language and physical cues.					
Subtotal each column						
Total Score						

Compliments Collection

Your facilitator will guide you through this exercise.

Reflecting on fond memories, recent acts of kindness, and the enduring qualities you appreciate or admire in your partner, take a few minutes now to jot down five compliments. You'll share these with your partner before you review and discuss your assessment results.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

For inspiration, consider how your spouse reflects the Fruit of the Spirit in your marriage:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience (Long-suffering)
- Gentleness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness

Our Discussion Covenant

Our Commitment: We affirm that this covenant creates a safe, loving space for growth—not judgment. Our partner is our "mirror," revealing blind spots and strengths. We trust God to transform our marriage through this conversation!

Why We Commit

1. Prioritize our relationship.
2. Feel valued, loved, and heard.
3. Ignite trust, romance, and intimacy.
4. Strengthen our bond forever.

Non-Negotiable Ground Rules

1. **Timing:** No meeting if tired, hungry, irritable, or intoxicated.
2. **Mindset:** Zero complaints, criticisms, or disappointment - focus on growth!
3. **Tone:** Use a warm, friendly voice and caring words.
4. **Body Language:** Sit side-by-side (not across), smile, eye contact, open posture.
5. **Mutual Goal:** Understand - not prove we're right.

Our Plan for Discussion


Our plan ensures our discussion brings grace, clarity, and a path to growth:

1. Agree on who begins sharing their assessment answers first.
2. Identify similarities and differences in our perceptions.
3. Celebrate the strengths and successes of how we currently communicate.
4. Define the desired changes we both want to make in our communication.
5. Offer positive ideas and support for helping each other improve our skills.

The Covenant Promise

You are about to step into your Marriage Mirror discussion. This is a time for grace and growth, not for defense or blame. The Covenant Promise secures a productive environment for your discussion. After the vow is read aloud, kindly respond by saying "I do."

❤️ **"Do you pledge to honor the Lord and one another as you look into your Marriage Mirror? Do you commit to listen with a heart of understanding, to speak with respect, and to respond with love, trusting that the Holy Spirit can make possible even that which seems impossible?"**

 **Prayer:** "Lord, As we prepare to discuss our results, we ask for your peace to fill the room. Help us to speak with honesty and to listen to one another with curiosity. We invite the Holy Spirit to give us ears to hear and the grace to see our blind spots, not as obstacles, but as opportunities for Your transformation. May the words we share be like honey – sweet to the soul and healthy for our relationship. Amen."

Husband signature

Wife signature

Date



Design Your Listening Action Plan

Step: 1 – Identify Your Goal

Record the skill you have chosen to develop. Describe the desired skill as simply and clearly as possible.

Example: Find your selected positive listening skill below.

1. When communicating with my partner, I will be aware of when my partner is upset.
2. Even when I am excited or upset, I will focus on my partner and listen.
3. When my partner speaks, I will give my partner my undivided attention.
4. I will pay more attention to what my partner means than to how the message is conveyed.
5. I will ask questions to clarify what I don't understand.
6. I will listen for my partner's main ideas and not get lost in the details.
7. I will listen for something of value in what my partner says even if I don't agree with everything my partner says.
8. I will wait without interrupting until my partner is through, then I will pause, think and respond.
9. I will communicate an understanding of my partner's thoughts and feelings before stating a contrary opinion.
10. I will not change the subject until either my partner is finished, or we agree to change the subject.
11. When my partner criticizes me, I will recognize and admit to anything that is true.
12. In conversation with my partner, I will listen more than I speak.
13. I will observe my partner's facial expressions (without staring) while my partner speaks.
14. I will notice the nonverbal messages given by my partner's body language and physical cues.

Your Plans:

<p>Identify Your Goal</p>

Step: 3 – Prepare for Action

In this step, you will build the "how-to" blueprint for your new habit. A commitment without a plan is just a wish. To succeed, you need to prepare your environment and your mind for consistent practice. How will you remind yourself to use this skill in the heat of the moment? Is there anything you need to study or have ready? Decide exactly when and where you are most likely to practice. Preparation means removing the friction so that when the moment arises, you don't have to think—you just act.

Example:

Find your selected skill number below to see examples of "Action Preparation" for your plan.

1. Study non-verbal cues (e.g. brow furrowing, pitch changes). Practice "scanning" posture/expression 3x daily to check the emotional climate.
2. Calm my system with 30 seconds of "Box Breathing". Use a physical anchor (touching my ring/sitting on hands) to stay grounded.
3. Eliminate distractions: turn screens off and set phones down immediately. Create a "phone-free" zone.
4. Adopt a "Heart-Translator" mindset. Mentally ask: "If their heart was speaking perfectly, what would it be trying to say?" Focus on the need being expressed.
5. Memorize three "Curiosity Starters" (e.g., "Help me understand..."). Wait for a thought to finish before asking a follow-up.
6. Practice "filtering": ask myself mid-story, "What is the ONE thing they really want me to know or feel?"
7. Hunt for the "1% Truth": find one specific point I can genuinely agree with before moving to my contrary opinion.
8. Press my tongue to the roof of my mouth or sip water while they speak. Take a deep breath and count to 3 in my head before I reply. Practice "STOP": Stop, Take a breath, Observe, Proceed.
9. Use the 'WAIT' acronym (Why Am I Talking?) to check my motives and the 'Echo' technique to reflect my partner's heart and gain confirmation that I accurately understand their view.
10. Commit to "Topic Completion": if the subject shifts, say "Let's finish this first, then we can talk about that".
11. View criticism as "Free Coaching". Practice "Clean Ownership": find the "Core Truth" and admit it without a "but".
12. Set a 10-minute timer for an uninterrupted "sharing block" focused entirely on my partner's heart. Ask 3 follow-up questions before making one "I" statement.
13. Study a "Faces of Emotion" chart. Position chairs to face each other directly. Practice "checking-in" on what I see (e.g., "I notice you look stressed; do you want to talk?").
14. Mirror positive body language (e.g., leaning in) to create rapport. If I notice "closed" cues, ask if they feel safe.

Your Plans:

Prepare for Action

Your Next Steps: Turning Intentions into Lasting Habits

Congratulations on completing **The Marriage Mirror** workshop! The tools you have learned are designed to protect your marriage for a lifetime, but the real transformation happens when you put them into practice starting today.

As you leave the workshop, keep these three essential reminders close to your heart:

1. **Practice Daily for 3 Weeks:** Commit to a focused, 21-day practice period. Dedicating the next three weeks to your action plan is the key to turning these action steps into permanent habits.
2. **Encourage Each Other with "Caught Ya" Cards:** Transformation thrives on encouragement. Be on the lookout for your spouse's efforts, and use your *Caught Ya cards* to intentionally catch them doing things right. Acknowledging their growth builds immediate momentum.
3. **Retake the Assessments:** In three weeks, log back into the program and retake the assessments. You will be incredibly encouraged to see a tangible, measurable reflection of just how much your relationship has grown!

The Marriage Mirror

Caught Ya Cards

Pillar: Listening Speaking Environment

Instructions: Use these cards to develop new communication habits and provide positive reinforcement.

GIVER: Complete the **Commitment Card** with the specific skill you are working on. Give the page to your partner.

RECEIVER: "Catch" your partner doing something good. Complete a **Feedback Card** to share your observations.



Making your Feedback Effective: Your positive feedback will help us both grow!

To ensure your observation is meaningful, remember to:

- Be Specific: Consciously identify the specific behavior you like.
- Be Prompt & Private: Promptly and privately give the card to your partner.

MY COMMITMENT: The skill I commit to deliberately practicing is:

Commitment Card

Commitment by: _____ Date: _____



Caught ya!

Date: _____

Feedback Card

Your effective communication did not go unnoticed. This is what I like about how you communicated with me:



Caught ya!

Date: _____

Feedback Card

Your effective communication did not go unnoticed. This is what I like about how you communicated with me:



Caught ya!

Date: _____

Feedback Card

Your effective communication did not go unnoticed. This is what I like about how you communicated with me:

Marriage Mirror Workshop Feedback Form

Thank you for participating in the Marriage Mirror Workshop. Your honest feedback is invaluable as we strive to strengthen marriages. Please rate the following statements based on your experience.

SCALE: 1 (STRONGLY AGREE) 2 (AGREE) 3 (DISAGREE) 4 (STRONGLY DISAGREE)	1	2	3	4
W1. The physical location and setup were conducive to open discussion.				
W2. The pace of the session(s) was appropriate for learning.				
W3. The group setting enhanced my learning through mutual encouragement.				
1. The Assessments clearly identified my communication habits and my partner's perspective.				
2. The Discussion Covenant prepared us to navigate our Assessment Review productively.				
3. The Discussion Hints and Motivation Tips provided valuable support for our conversation and habit practice.				
4. The material was relevant to our marriage.				
5. The program helped us integrate God's perspective into our communication.				
6. The Visualization Guide helped me mentally prepare to apply my new skill.				
7. The Action Plan was useful in helping me create actionable steps for applying my new chosen skill.				
8. I feel confident in implementing the new habits in my Action Plan(s).				
9. The Caught Ya Cards, Heartgrams, and Action Decks were useful tools for reinforcing new habits..				
10. The navigation of the site was smooth and logical (<i>if applicable/online version</i>).				
11. (If you completed ONLY the Listening Pillar*) I feel equipped to complete the remaining Pillars.				
12. I would recommend the Marriage Mirror program to other couples.				
13. What was the most valuable part of the Marriage Mirror workshop for you?				
14. What is one thing that could be improved or changed about the Marriage Mirror program?				
15. Do you have any further comments for the facilitator or program developers?				

Please email a scan or photo of your completed Feedback Form to info@marriagemirror.com.

Speaking – Assessment of Self <i>(How I perceive my own speaking habits)</i> 5 = ALMOST ALWAYS; 4 = USUALLY; 3 = SOMETIMES; 2 = SELDOM; 1 = ALMOST NEVER		NAME:				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I clearly communicate that I like to talk with my partner.					
2	I compliment my partner often.					
3	I can express disagreement without turning my partner off.					
4	If I criticize my partner, I focus on the issue and avoid any sense of superiority.					
5	I am direct and honest instead of dancing around an issue.					
6	I do not bring up the past when dealing with a present situation.					
7	I ask my partner for feedback to ensure that the message I sent was accurately understood.					
8	When negotiating, I speak in a manner that encourages cooperation.					
9	I avoid trigger words and nonverbal cues that will unnecessarily evoke a negative response.					
10	I think about what I am going to say before I speak.					
11	I remain cordial and respectful of my partner even if my partner disagrees with what I said.					
12	I share freely with my partner, trusting that what I share will be kept confidential.					
Subtotal each column						
Total Score						

Speaking – Assessment of Partner <i>(How I perceive my partner's speaking habits)</i> 5 = ALMOST ALWAYS; 4 = USUALLY; 3 = SOMETIMES; 2 = SELDOM; 1 = ALMOST NEVER		NAME:				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	It's clear that my partner likes to communicate with me.					
2	My partner compliments me often.					
3	My partner can express disagreement with me without turning me off.					
4	When my partner criticizes, there is no sense of superiority and the focus is on the issue, not on me.					
5	My partner is direct and honest instead of dancing around an issue.					
6	My partner does not bring up the past when dealing with a present situation.					
7	My partner asks for feedback to ensure that the message sent was accurately understood.					
8	When negotiating, my partner speaks in a manner that encourages cooperation.					
9	My partner avoids trigger words and nonverbal cues that will unnecessarily evoke a negative response.					
10	My partner thinks about what to say before speaking.					
11	My partner remains cordial and respectful of me even if I disagree with what my partner said.					
12	My partner shares freely with me, trusting me to keep it confidential.					
Subtotal each column						
Total Score						



Design Your Speaking Action Plan

Step: 1 – Identify Your Goal

Record the skill you have chosen to develop. Describe the desired skill as simply and clearly as possible.

Example: Find your selected positive listening skill below.

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.
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.

Your Plans:

Identify Your Goal

Step: 2 – Overcome Obstacles

Life happens. Even with the best intentions, stress or fatigue can trigger old communication "muscle memory". What specific situations make it hardest to stay in your new habit? Identifying these triggers now allows you to pre-program a better response for later. If you revert to an old pattern, don't spiral. Be patient with yourself and your partner. Forgive quickly and pivot back to the new skill as soon as you realize what happened. Knowing why you haven't mastered this skill yet is half the battle. Anticipating the obstacle now prepares you to handle it with grace when it inevitably arises. Foreseeing an obstacle isn't expecting failure; it's building a roadmap for recovery. What potential "roadblocks" might cause you to revert to your old habit instead of your new one?

Example:

Find your selected skill number below to see examples of "Obstacles to Overcome" for your plan.

1. Assuming they already know; being "peopled out" or exhausted from work.
2. Noticing the negative more than the positive; "taking them for granted"; feeling "cheezy;" forgetting to express my appreciation.
3. The "urgent need" to be right; the "Blame Trap": "You always/never..." or "You make me...."; the habit of leading with a harsh, frustrated tone.
4. Self-righteousness; the urge to "parent," teach or lecture my partner; believing my way is the only "right" way; feeling superior when my partner makes mistakes.
5. Fear of conflict; people-pleasing; the belief that if they really loved me, I wouldn't have to ask; using "hints" to avoid the vulnerability of a direct request.
6. Needing "ammo" to win a current fight; the "Scorekeeper" mentality, feeling that a past mistake was never fully resolved or "paid for."
7. Assuming that because it makes sense to me, it makes sense to them. Being too rushed to double-check. Fearing that asking for a recap will sound patronizing.
8. A controlling nature; a "my way or the highway" mentality; using authoritative words like "You need to" instead of collaborative language like "How about...?"
9. Using sarcasm as a defense mechanism; using humor to "bite" or deflect; the momentary "satisfaction" of a clever jab; believing a "Zinger" will best make my point.
10. Emotional "Flooding" (where feelings overwhelm logic); impulsive speech; the habit of "thinking out loud" without a filter.
11. "Righteous Anger"; the belief that my partner doesn't "deserve" my respect. Viewing my spouse as an "enemy" to be defeated rather than a friend I disagree with.
12. Fear of judgment, mockery. Fear that my private struggles will be shared with others. The habit of keeping a separate inner life to avoid potential conflict.

Your Plans:

Overcome Obstacles

Step: 3 – Prepare for Action

In this step, you will build the "how-to" blueprint for your new habit. A commitment without a plan is just a wish. To succeed, you need to prepare your environment and your mind for consistent practice. How will you remind yourself to use this skill in the heat of the moment? Is there anything you need to study or have ready? Decide exactly when and where you are most likely to practice. Preparation means removing the friction so that when the moment arises, you don't have to think—you just act.

Example:

Find your selected skill number below to see examples of "Action Preparation" for your plan.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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).
5. 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 they will "just figure it out." Say: "I have a specific need I'd like to share."
6. 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.
7. 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?"
8. 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.
9. 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 (e.g., "I'm feeling frustrated") instead of making a "clever" sarcastic comment.
10. 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."
11. 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.
12. 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."

Your Plans:

<p>Prepare for Action</p>

Step: 5 – See the Benefits

Visualizing the payoff is one of the most powerful ways to stay motivated when things get difficult. By defining exactly what you stand to gain, you give your brain a reason to prioritize this new habit over old patterns. Fast-forward to the payoff: Imagine it is 21 days from now and you've mastered this skill. What are the benefits?

Example:

Find your selected skill number below to see examples of "Benefits" for your plan.

1. Makes them feel wanted. Reduces anxiety of being a "burden." Builds a foundation of friendship, not just logistics.
2. Boosts confidence. Builds a culture of appreciation. Creates emotional grace where small mistakes matter less because the bank account is full.
3. Problems are solved in the receptive "Safe Zone" rather than "Fight-or-Flight." We move from Opponents to Partners. Keeps the door open for resolution and connection.
4. Preserves partner's dignity. Fosters a team atmosphere where they actually want to help and cooperate because they feel respected, not judged.
5. No more "mind-reading" games or resentment from unmet, unstated needs. Requests get answered because they are finally understood. More emotional energy available for both.
6. Allows for true "clean slates," making forgiveness a reality rather than just a word. Makes it safe for my partner to admit a mistake today without fear of a "history lesson."
7. Prevents the "I thought you meant..." arguments three days later. Builds a culture of "collaborative clarity." Catches misunderstandings before they have a chance to turn into fights.
8. My partner feels like a co-creator of our life. They become motivated by love and shared vision rather than pressured by duty. It builds a sustainable "Win-Win" culture.
9. Creates "emotional safety," allowing my partner to be vulnerable without fear of being mocked or "stung." Breaks a cycle of retaliation where one Zinger leads to another.
10. My words become a "blessing" instead of a "weapon." I build a reputation as a safe, wise, and steady partner whom my spouse can trust even during a disagreement.
11. Protects the long-term dignity of the marriage. Prevents "scar tissue" caused by yelling. Ensures the friendship stays intact even when the agreement is missing.
12. Leads to the highest form of intimacy: being fully known and fully loved. Creates a "shared inner world" that belongs only to the two of us, making the marriage a true refuge.

Your Plans:

See the Benefits

Step 6 – Cost of Inaction

Growth takes effort, but staying stuck has its own price. To stay committed, you must be honest about what happens if you choose not to change. What is the "cost of inaction" for your relationship? Think about the impact on your home, your connection, and your energy. If these old habits continue, what will the "vibe" of your home feel like in six months? How will your emotional intimacy or friendship suffer if this skill isn't mastered? What is the mental and emotional toll of repeating the same arguments or misunderstandings?

The Reality Check: Inaction isn't free; it costs you the peace and connection you deserve. Write down what you stand to lose if you revert to your old patterns.

Example:

Find your selected skill number below to see examples of "Costs of Inaction" for your plan.

1. Partner feels like an "obligation" or a chore, leading them to withdraw and stop sharing their inner life.
2. A "Criticism Culture" grows. Without regular praise, the partner feels unappreciated and eventually resentful.
3. Harsh startups are the #1 predictor of divorce; they trigger defensiveness.
4. My partner may stop listening entirely to protect their heart from the "sting" of my accusations. My partner feels belittled and "less than," leading to power struggles or a "rebellious" withdrawal where they stop caring about my needs altogether.
5. Passive-aggression creates a "toxic fog" where the partner is always on edge. It destroys trust because they feel "set up to fail" a test they didn't know they were taking.
6. The partner feels they can never "pay off the debt" of the past. If they feel they are already "bankrupt" in my eyes, they will stop trying to improve or invest in the relationship today.
7. Small miscommunications compound into massive frustrations. Failed tasks from misunderstandings are misinterpreted as "not caring" and lead to resentment.
8. Demands and "musts" create immediate internal resistance. Even if the partner complies, they do so with a growing heart of bitterness and a loss of intimacy.
9. "Zingers" act like emotional acid; they eat away at the foundation of the marriage until there is nothing left to hold onto.
10. Words said in anger can be forgiven, but they can never be un-heard. They create "memory scars" that stay with my partner forever, regardless of how many times I apologize.
11. When respect is lost, the friendship dies. Once our friendship dies, the marriage loses its soul and becomes a cold, distant "business arrangement" or a "roommate" situation.
12. Without confidentiality, the relationship feels exposed. Without transparency, it feels distant and alienated. Eventually, 2 strangers live under one roof, looking for safety elsewhere.

Your Plans:

Cost of Inaction

Environment – Assessment of Self <i>(How I perceive my own environment habits)</i> 5 = ALMOST ALWAYS; 4 = USUALLY; 3 = SOMETIMES; 2 = SELDOM; 1 = ALMOST NEVER		NAME:				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	I do not allow my schedule to negatively affect my ability to communicate with my partner.					
2	I have a regular time together with my partner for talking.					
3	For important discussions, I find a time and place where we will not be interrupted.					
4	I consider how internal and external factors can influence the emotion in our conversation.					
5	When the environment is not suitable, I suggest we change the time and/or place to continue our conversation.					
6	I am aware of significant dates in my partner’s life, especially those which are felt emotionally.					
7	I recognize and remove sounds or images that would be distracting.					
8	I know which of my clothes and general appearance my partner most appreciates.					
9	I know the best environment in which to discuss important matters with my partner.					
10	I am aware of the time of day when my partner is most able to have a meaningful conversation.					
11	I am aware of my partner’s favorite kinds of places, both indoors and outdoors.					
12	I know what kind of lighting my partner prefers for various activities.					
Subtotal each column						
Total Score						

Environment – Assessment of Partner <i>(How I perceive my partner's environment habits)</i> 5 = ALMOST ALWAYS; 4 = USUALLY; 3 = SOMETIMES; 2 = SELDOM; 1 = ALMOST NEVER		NAME:				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	My partner does not allow their schedule to negatively affect their ability to communicate with me.					
2	My partner has a regular time together with me for talking.					
3	For important discussions, my partner finds a time and place where we will not be interrupted.					
4	My partner considers how internal and external factors can influence the emotion in our conversation.					
5	When the environment is not suitable, my partner suggests we change the time and/or place to continue our conversation.					
6	My partner is aware of significant dates in my life, especially those which are felt emotionally.					
7	My partner recognizes and removes sounds or images that would be distracting.					
8	My partner knows which clothes and general appearance I most appreciate.					
9	My partner knows the best environment in which to discuss important matters with me.					
10	My partner is aware of the time of day when I am most able to have a meaningful conversation.					
11	My partner is aware of my favorite kinds of places, both indoors and outdoors.					
12	My partner knows what kind of lighting I prefer for various activities.					
Subtotal each column						
Total Score						



Design Your Environment Action Plan

Action Plan Steps

Step: 1 – Identify Your Goal

Record the skill you have chosen to develop. Describe the desired skill as simply and clearly as possible.

Example: Find your selected positive listening skill below.

1. I will not allow my schedule to negatively affect my ability to communicate with my partner.
2. I will encourage and work with my partner to have a regular time together for talking.
3. For important discussions, I will work with my partner to find a time and place free from interruptions.
4. I will consider how internal and external factors influence our emotions in conversation and adjust accordingly.
5. When the environment is unsuitable, I will suggest a better time and/or place to continue our conversation.
6. I will recognize and honor significant dates in my partner’s life, especially those which are felt emotionally.
7. I will recognize and remove sounds or images that would be distracting.
8. I will observe and appropriately choose the clothes and general appearance my partner most appreciates.
9. I will learn and choose the best environment in which to discuss important matters with my partner.
10. I will learn and choose the time of day when my partner is most able to have a meaningful conversation.
11. I will learn and choose my partner’s favorite kinds of places for conversation, both indoors and outdoors.
12. I will learn and choose the kind of lighting my partner prefers for various activities.

Your Plans:

Identify Your Goal

Step: 2 – Overcome Obstacles

Life happens. Even with the best intentions, stress or fatigue can trigger old communication "muscle memory". What specific situations make it hardest to stay in your new habit? Identifying these triggers now allows you to pre-program a better response for later. If you revert to an old pattern, don't spiral. Be patient with yourself and your partner. Forgive quickly and pivot back to the new skill as soon as you realize what happened. Knowing why you haven't mastered this skill yet is half the battle. Anticipating the obstacle now prepares you to handle it with grace when it inevitably arises. Foreseeing an obstacle isn't expecting failure; it's building a roadmap for recovery. What potential "roadblocks" might cause you to revert to your old habit instead of your new one?

Example:

Find your selected skill number below to see examples of "Obstacles to Overcome" for your plan.

1. The "busy trap;" letting work or chores dictate connection; assuming we'll talk "when there's time"; the daily "grind"; kids' activities.
2. "Roommate Syndrome"- only discussing logistics (bills/kids); relying on "accidental" connection; fatigue.
3. Lack of privacy at home or in public; kids needing attention; the TV on; the "distraction trap"
4. Work deadlines; physical stressors; impulsiveness; wanting to "get it off my chest" regardless of their state.
5. The "Urgency Trap"—feeling a talk must happen now, even if the setting is bad. Looking like I'm avoiding talking.
6. Viewing dates as "just a number"; forgetting the emotional weight of anniversaries or losses. Using the excuse "I'm bad with dates" to justify lack of preparation
7. Habitual screen use or background noise; "multi-tasking" while talking; fear of "the silence"; a cluttered physical space that creates mental "static."
8. Assuming my appearance doesn't matter anymore; ignoring my partner's preferences; believing they should love me no matter how I look.
9. Thinking "anywhere will do." Failing to notice or care where my partner is most comfortable. Assuming that the environment won't affect a high-stakes talk.
10. Different "chronotypes" (Morning Bird vs. Night Owl). Expecting a partner to be articulate and patient when their biological clock is at a low point.
11. Concerns over cost or travel time; assuming my own favorite place is better; forgetting that a change of scenery (e.g. porch, park, bench) can shift the tone of a talk.
12. Being unaware or dismissive of how our biology reacts to surroundings; believing it shouldn't matter if the heart is right.

Your Plans:

Overcome Obstacles

Step: 3 – Prepare for Action

In this step, you will build the "how-to" blueprint for your new habit. A commitment without a plan is just a wish. To succeed, you need to prepare your environment and your mind for consistent practice. How will you remind yourself to use this skill in the heat of the moment? Is there anything you need to study or have ready? Decide exactly when and where you are most likely to practice. Preparation means removing the friction so that when the moment arises, you don't have to think—you just act.

Example:

Find your selected skill number below to see examples of "Action Preparation" for your plan.

1. Review the weekly calendar together. Block out non-negotiable "connection windows." Prioritize the relationship over the to-do list. Refuse to let a calendar crisis become a marriage crisis.
2. Establish a daily "Check-in" and a weekly "Deep Dive." Treat these as non-negotiable appointments. Set a recurring invite. Have a "question of the day" ready.
3. Agree on a "safe signal" that means "I need to talk privately soon." Ensure physical privacy so we can be fully vulnerable. Silence phones, close doors, eliminate distractions.
4. Assess the "Emotional Weather" first. Ask: "Is now a good time, or would [X] be better?" Check "HALT" (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired) before a discussion.
5. Pause and Redirect: "This is too important for a car ride. Can we talk tonight at 8?" Always offer an alternative time if I postpone a talk. Commit to the follow-up.
6. Mark my calendar in advance with recurring alerts. Set "one-week-out" reminders so I can plan a gesture or gift. Ask: "How are you feeling today?" during "tough dates" (e.g., loss of a parent or past trauma).
7. Initiate a "clear the clutter" session so we can relax in a clean space. Turn off the TV. Put phones in a basket, drawer, or another room. Square my shoulders to signal total focus. Ensure background music is quiet and soothing, not distracting.
8. Learn what my partner specifically appreciates. Ask: "What's one thing I wear that makes you feel like I'm making an effort for you?" Choose to dress up occasionally specifically for them, even if there is no outside audience.
9. Test different environments: a porch, a park bench, a coffee shop. Observe where my partner opens up most (e.g., side-by-side on a walk vs. face-to-face at the table). Lead them to those spaces for important discussions.
10. Identify my partner's "Peak Clarity" time. Schedule meaningful or difficult talks during this window. Ask: "Do you have the mental energy for a talk right now, or would it be better after [coffee/rest/food]?"
11. Ask: "Where is it easiest for you to open up and talk? Where do you feel most safe to share your heart?" Incorporate nature or their favorite indoor nook into my weekly rhythm. Suggest a change of venue when things feel "stale."
12. Experiment with "mood lighting" to suit the activity (dim for intimacy, bright for logistics). Learn their "sensory triggers." Make it a habit to "set the stage" before inviting a deep conversation.

Your Plans:

<p>Prepare for Action</p>

Step: 5 – See the Benefits

Visualizing the payoff is one of the most powerful ways to stay motivated when things get difficult. By defining exactly what you stand to gain, you give your brain a reason to prioritize this new habit over old patterns. Fast-forward to the payoff: Imagine it is 21 days from now and you've mastered this skill. What are the benefits?

Example:

Find your selected skill number below to see examples of "Benefits" for your plan.

1. Lowers stress. Keeps connection alive. Ensures the relationship is the "engine," not a passenger. Prevents "drifting" like "ships in the night".
2. Prevents "drifting apart" during busy seasons. Provides a "shared inner world" and "safety net." Gives us something to look forward to.
3. Higher-quality connection in less time. We each feel like the "only person in the room." Deeper focus; lasting solutions.
4. Prevents unnecessary fights. Sets conversations up for success. Decisions are made with a clear head rather than an irritable heart.
5. Ensures both of us are "fully present." Increases the chance of a successful resolution.
6. Deepens the bond. Validates that I care about what they care about. Makes them feel deeply known and valued. Heals old wounds with new attentiveness.
7. Validates my partner's importance. Creates a relaxing "sanctuary" at home. Allows for faster resolution of issues because I am fully present and catching subtle cues.
8. Boosts confidence. Builds a culture of appreciation. Maintains physical attraction necessary for long-term romance. Signals "You're worth the effort."
9. Reduces environmental anxiety. A relaxing physical environment lowers cortisol levels, keeping both of us in the "receptive zone." Makes "hard talks" feel easier and more natural.
10. Maximizes mental focus. Reduces the frustration of "talking to a wall" when a partner is physically drained. Leads to clearer thinking, and better decisions and outcomes.
11. Builds a "Shared Inner World." Nature or favorite spots lower cortisol and boost openness. The setting does half the work of "opening up" a healthy substantive conversation.
12. Creates a "sensory sanctuary" that physically calms the nervous system. Lighting signals the psychological and biological shift from work-mode to soul-mode.

Your Plans:

<h3>See the Benefits</h3>

Step 6 – Cost of Inaction

Growth takes effort, but staying stuck has its own price. To stay committed, you must be honest about what happens if you choose not to change. What is the "cost of inaction" for your relationship? Think about the impact on your home, your connection, and your energy. If these old habits continue, what will the "vibe" of your home feel like in six months? How will your emotional intimacy or friendship suffer if this skill isn't mastered? What is the mental and emotional toll of repeating the same arguments or misunderstandings?

The Reality Check: Inaction isn't free; it costs you the peace and connection you deserve. Write down what you stand to lose if you revert to your old patterns.

Example:

Find your selected skill number below to see examples of "Costs of Inaction" for your plan.

1. If communication is "optional," it stops. You know the schedule, but not the soul.
2. Without a rhythm, conversations become purely transactional. Intimacy withers into a business relationship.
3. "Drive-by" conversations lead to shallow living. Important details are missed or forgotten.
4. Talking while "flooded" leads to "Zingers" and regrettable words that can't be taken back.
5. Forcing a talk in a bad environment leads to defensiveness and "shutting down."
6. Forgetting or ignoring a significant date feels like a "silent rejection" of the partner's heart. It signals that their history isn't worth the effort of a calendar entry.
7. Distractions signal "you aren't a priority." It creates a sense of being invisible or secondary. Over time, the partner stops trying to share.
8. Neglecting appearance can signal "I've stopped trying." It can contribute to a loss of romantic spark and the feeling that the "chase" is over and the passion is dead.
9. Using the wrong setting (crowded or noisy) can cause a partner to "clam up." The discomfort of the environment creates a psychological barrier that prevents deep connection.
10. Picking the wrong time leads to irritation, poor memory of the talk, and eventual resentment. It sets the partner up for failure by demanding a level of focus they literally can't provide.
11. Staying in high-stress spots keeps the body in "task-mode." The brain stays focused on to-do lists rather than heart-sharing, making intimacy feel like an interruption.
12. Harsh lights can kill the mood and make the nervous system feel "exposed," preventing the physiological safety needed for vulnerability, intimacy and openness.

Your Plans:

Cost of Inaction

