

Appreciations

Each partner fills in a column about the other. Take turns reading them aloud. The listener only says "thank you".

From _____ to _____

Something you did this week that I noticed

A quality I admire in you

A way you make my life easier

A memory of us I treasure

Something I've never quite thanked you for

From _____ to _____

Something you did this week that I noticed

A quality I admire in you

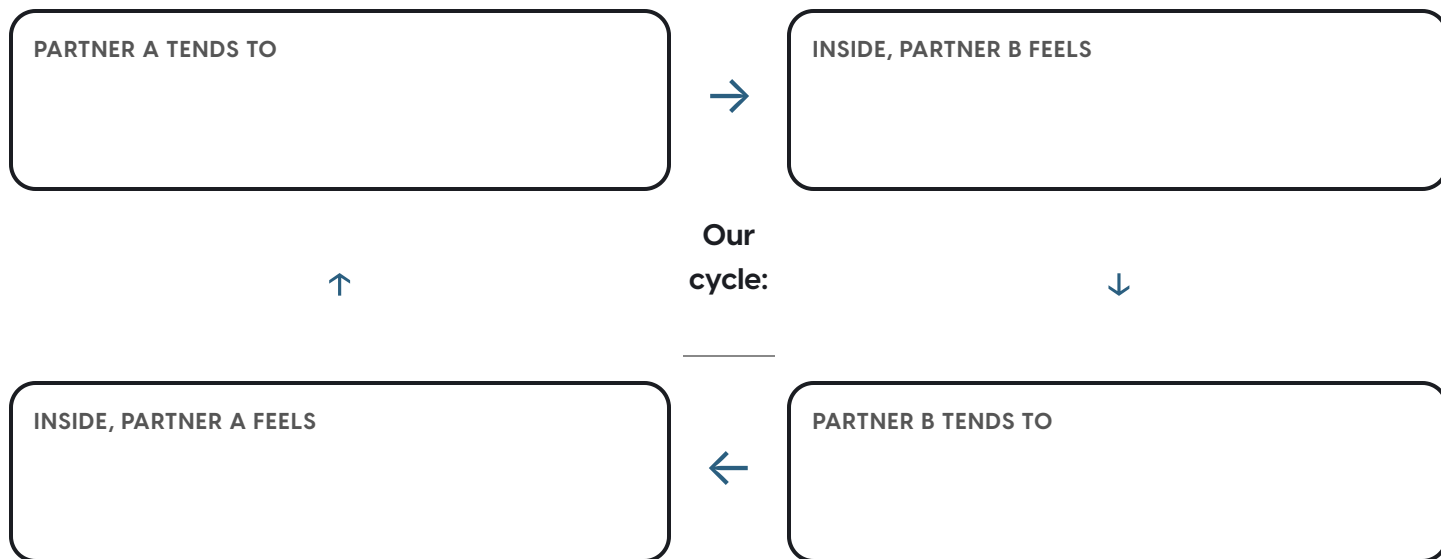
A way you make my life easier

A memory of us I treasure

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Our Conflict Cycle

When one partner reaches harder, the other often pulls back, and each move sets off the other. Fill in your own side. The cycle is the problem, not either of you.



Partner A

When things get tense, I tend to: ☐ reach harder ☐ pull back ☐ some of both

What often sets it off

Underneath, I feel (circle or add)

alone · scared of losing the relationship · not good enough · overwhelmed · rejected · unimportant · hurt · helpless · ashamed

What I really need is

to know I matter to you · reassurance that we are okay · a short break to calm down · to feel heard · to feel safe with you · closeness · patience

Partner B

When things get tense, I tend to: ☐ reach harder ☐ pull back ☐ some of both

What often sets it off

Underneath, I feel (circle or add)

alone · scared of losing the relationship · not good enough · overwhelmed · rejected · unimportant · hurt · helpless · ashamed

What I really need is

to know I matter to you · reassurance that we are okay · a short break to calm down · to feel heard · to feel safe with you · closeness · patience

The idea of a negative cycle between partners comes from Emotionally Focused Therapy (Sue Johnson).

I Statements and Repair

A gentle way to raise a concern

Feeling words: hurt · worried · lonely · frustrated · overwhelmed · disappointed · anxious · sad · embarrassed · unappreciated

I feel _____ when _____

because _____

Would you be willing to _____ ?

I feel _____ when _____

because _____

Would you be willing to _____ ?

Listener: Listen to the end before you answer. Say back what you heard: "You felt... when... because..." Ask: "Did I get that right? What would help?"

Repair attempts we can use

Tick the ones that would reach you in the middle of an argument.

Slow it down

☐ ☐ Can we slow down?

☐ ☐ Let me try that again.

☐ ☐ Can we start over?

☐ ☐ This is getting too heated for me. Can we pause?

Own my part

☐ ☐ You're right about that part.

☐ ☐ I'm sorry, that came out harsh.

☐ ☐ I can see my part in this.

☐ ☐ That's fair.

Reach for each other

☐ ☐ We're on the same team.

☐ ☐ I love you, even when we argue.

☐ ☐ Can I have a hug?

☐ ☐ This matters to me because you matter to me.

Try to understand

☐ ☐ Help me understand what you need.

☐ ☐ Tell me more. I'm listening.

☐ ☐ What I hear you saying is...

☐ ☐ What would help right now?

Lighten it

☐ ☐ Truce? I'll make the tea.

☐ ☐ Can we try this again with a smile?

☐ ☐ Our inside joke

Our own

If we need a break, we'll say _____

We'll take _____ minutes to _____ and then come back.

Our Weekly Check-In

Date _____

Pick a regular time, about thirty minutes, with phones away. Start and end with something good. If a hard topic gets heated, pause it and agree when to come back to it. Keep it short. A check-in that happens every week beats a long one that does not.

1. Appreciations about 3 minutes

One thing you appreciated about your partner this week.

A _____

B _____

2. What went well about 3 minutes

Something that went well for the two of you.

3. One hard thing about 10 minutes

One thing that was hard, raised gently with an I statement. The other listens and says back what they heard.

A _____

B _____

4. The week ahead about 7 minutes

Calendar, money, kids, chores: what needs planning.

5. One thing I need about 4 minutes

One thing that would help you next week.

A _____

B _____

6. Something to look forward to about 3 minutes

Plan one moment of connection or fun this week.
