



COMMUNICATION TOOLBOX

FOR COUPLES

Course Workbook and Resources

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*This page is blank so you can print the first section off
double-sided without messing up the other section.*

You can use it to draw a picture of your spouse. Or not.

THE SUNDAY NIGHT



RUN DOWN

YOU'LL ONLY LIVE THIS WEEK ONCE. MAKE IT AWESOME.

☐ THE CALENDAR

- ☐ **BIG STUFF**
- ☐ **WEEKNIGHTS**
- ☐ **DINNERS**
- ☐ **CHILDCARE**
- ☐ **THE WEEKEND**
- ☐ **FUN**
- ☐ **CHORES** (*GRASS, GROCERIES, ETC.*)
- ☐ **CONNECTION** (DATE NIGHT, NETFLIX, CHILL)
- ☐ **MARGIN** (WHERE'S THE BREATHING ROOM?)
- ☐ **ANYTHING WE SHOULD BAIL ON?**
- ☐ **COMING UP** (BIG STUFF IN THE NEXT MONTH)

☐ THE FINANCES

- ☐ ANY SURPRISES LAST WEEK?
- ☐ BIG EXPENSES THIS WEEK?
- ☐ HOW'S OUR BUDGET LOOKING?

☐ THE CHECK-IN

- ☐ WHAT WAS THE BEST PART OF LAST WEEK?
- ☐ WHAT WAS THE WORST PART OF LAST WEEK?
- ☐ HOW DO YOU WANT TO GROW THIS WEEK?
- ☐ ANYTHING ELSE WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT?

☐ CELEBRATE

YOU JUST DID SOME MAJOR ADULTING AND SET YOUR FAMILY UP FOR A GREAT WEEK. GO CRAZY AND TREAT YOURSELF ON A SUNDAY NIGHT.



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MON

TUE

WED

THUR

FRI

SAT

SUN

SUNDAY RUNDOWN

BUSY FAMILIES LIVE BUSY LIVES.
IF YOU DON'T ORDER YOUR WEEK, YOUR WEEK WILL ORDER YOU.

HOW TO USE THE SUNDAY RUNDOWN:

TAKE 20 MINUTES OUT OF YOUR SUNDAY TO TAKE A LOOK AT THE WEEK AHEAD. PRINT OFF A COPY OF THE SUNDAY RUNDOWN TO GIVE ORDER TO YOUR ORDERING.

THIS EXERCISE WILL BE AWKWARD AT FIRST, SO MAKE A COMMITMENT TO TRY IT FOR ONE MONTH WORTH OF SUNDAYS.

BREAK OUT THE CALENDARS

WHATEVER CALENDARING FORMAT YOU USE, BRING IT TO THE TABLE. IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, USE THE WEEK GRID AT THE BOTTOM.

SPEND SOME TIME FINDING ALIGNMENT AND LOOKING FOR WAYS TO ELBOW OUT ROOM FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS. IF WE DON'T SCHEDULE THE THINGS THAT GIVE US THE MOST LIFE, WE WILL PUT THEM OFF FOR ANOTHER WEEK.

PEEK AT YOUR FINANCES

TAKING WEEKLY GLANCES AT YOUR FINANCIAL PICTURE WILL HELP YOU STAY ON TRACK, KEEP UP WITH YOUR GOALS, AND - SURPRISINGLY - BUILD A SENSE OF INTIMACY IN ONE OF THE MOST COMMON RESENTMENT TRAPS A RELATIONSHIP CAN FALL INTO.

IF THESE QUESTIONS TRIP YOU UP, CONSIDER GROWING YOUR FINANCIAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH DAVE RAMSEY'S "TOTAL MONEY MAKEOVER".

CHECK IN WITH THE ONE YOU LOVE

SPEND A FEW MINUTES TALKING ABOUT THE IMPORTANT STUFF BEFORE ANOTHER WEEK OF RUNNING BEGINS. THIS MEETING TIME CAN BECOME A NEUTRAL ARENA FOR HONESTY TO BE EXPRESSED AND RESPONDED TO. GIVE YOURSELF EXTRA TIME TO TALK OVER ANYTHING THAT COMES UP DURING THE CHECK-IN.

CELEBRATE

START YOUR WEEK WELL BY CELEBRATING THE WORK YOU'VE JUST DONE. IT WON'T JUST MAKE LIFE A LITTLE BRIGHTER, IT WILL ALSO MOTIVATE YOU TO COME BACK TO THE RUNDOWN 7 DAYS FROM NOW.

Couple's Check-Up Activity

Determine if these specific relationship areas are sources of strength or conflict.



Level 1

Communication	Strength Area (S) or Conflict Area (C)?	Mild (M) or Severe (S)	Acute (A) or Chronic (C)
Expressing Empathy			
Feeling Heard and Understood			
Compromise			
Fighting Fair			
Avoiding Conflict			

Partnership	Strength Area (S) or Conflict Area (C)?	Mild (M) or Severe (S)	Acute (A) or Chronic (C)
Social Styles			
Friends' Influence/Opinions			
Balancing Time Together and Apart			
Having Fun Together			
Technology and Other Distractions			

Relationship Roles	Strength Area (S) or Conflict Area (C)?	Mild (M) or Severe (S)	Acute (A) or Chronic (C)
Household Chores			
Childcare			
Work/Life Balance			
Coping With Stress			
Teamwork			

Level 1 - Page 2

Trust	Strength Area (S) or Conflict Area (C)?	Mild (M) or Severe (S)	Acute (A) or Chronic (C)
Repairing connection after a fight			
Forgiveness			
Betrayals			
Health and Wellness Habits			
Addiction or Destructive Habits			

Family	Strength Area (S) or Conflict Area (C)?	Mild (M) or Severe (S)	Acute (A) or Chronic (C)
Your parents' opinion/influence			
Your in-laws' opinion/influence			
Parenting Styles			
Attachment Styles			

Commitment	Strength Area (S) or Conflict Area (C)?	Mild (M) or Severe (S)	Acute (A) or Chronic (C)
Personality Differences			
Mental Health Issues			
Shared Vision of the Future			
Making Decisions			
Prioritizing Connection			

Level 2 and Summary

Intimacy	Strength Area (S) or Conflict Area (C)?	Mild (M) or Severe (S)	Acute (A) or Chronic (C)
Satisfaction			
Frequency			
Desire			
Affection			
Emotional Intimacy			

Finances	Strength Area (S) or Conflict Area (C)?	Mild (M) or Severe (S)	Acute (A) or Chronic (C)
Spending Habits			
Saving Habits			
Budget Priorities			
Merging Money / Joint Accounts			
Debt			

Summary

Take a few minutes to look back through your own assessment.

Which category includes the most **strengths**? _____

Which category includes the most **conflicts**? _____

*In your opinion, what are your top three areas of **strength**?:*

*In your opinion, what are your top three areas of **conflict**?:*

After you compare: What did you learn about your spouse's perspective after seeing their assessment?

***Assessment was adapted from The Marriage Counseling Workbook by Dr. Emily Cook*

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Narratives

The stories we tell about each other, ourselves, and our relationship can be helpful in understanding our partner and ourselves. However, when difficult times hit, it can be tempting to focus on these stories instead of the real person in front of us. This can lead to misunderstandings and conflict.

My narratives about YOU:

Examples:

*"You are only happy when
you get your way."*

*"You are just like your
mother."*

My narratives about ME:

Examples:

*"I'm not good at
communicating"*

"I'm just old fashioned"

My narratives about US:

Examples:

*"We don't have anything in
common."*

*"We'll never see eye-to-
eye on our finances."*

Important: the stories we tell are not always accurate representations of reality. They can be influenced by our own biases and experiences. When we are in a difficult situation, it is important to try to see our partner for who they are, not just through the lens of our stories.

Remember: It takes two people to deconstruct a narrative. Both partners have to be willing to offer insight, grace, redos, and patience in order for unhealthy assumptions to give way to a more trusting connection.



FAIR FIGHTING RULES **DON'T**

GET HISTORICAL

FOCUS ON ONE THING AT A TIME. DON'T RE-LITIGATE EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED BEFORE NOW.

SAY 'ALWAYS' OR 'NEVER'

IT OFTEN DISTRACTS FROM THE ISSUE OR EVENT AT HAND AND IT'S RARELY TRUE

GET HYSTERICAL

KEEP YOUR ANGER IN CHECK OR TAKE A BREAK.

THREATEN DIVORCE / BREAKING UP

IT SIDETRACKS ANY SENSE OF COLLABORATION. YOU CAN DISCUSS ENDING THE RELATIONSHIP PRACTICALLY AT ANOTHER TIME IF NECESSARY

STONEWALL

COMMIT TO RESOLVING CONFLICT AS SOON AS YOU CAN TO AVOID RESENTMENT

FAIR FIGHTING RULES **DO**

SCHEDULE YOUR CONFLICT

FOR A TIME AND PLACE YOU CAN WORK TOWARD RESOLUTION.

FOCUS ON THE ISSUE, NOT THE PERSON

BECOME ALLIES IN SOLVING A PROBLEM, NOT ENEMIES ATTACKING EACH OTHER

TAKE TURNS TALKING

DON'T INTERRUPT - IT JUST RAISES THE TENSION MORE.

START SENTENCES WITH "I"

KEEP THE FOCUS ON EXPERIENCES, EMOTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS.

LOOK FOR WAYS TO COMPROMISE

REMEMBER: YOU ARE ON THE SAME TEAM



The Question

What do you need from me? Do you want me to **help** you, **hear** you, **hug** you, or just **hold on**?

BIDS

ANY EFFORT OR ATTEMPT TO CONNECT WITH A PARTNER:
ATTENTION, AFFECTION, SUPPORT, COMFORT, ETC

**TURN
TOWARD**

**TURN
AWAY**

**TURN
AGAINST**

5 Love Languages



Quality Time



Gifts



**Words of
Affirmation**

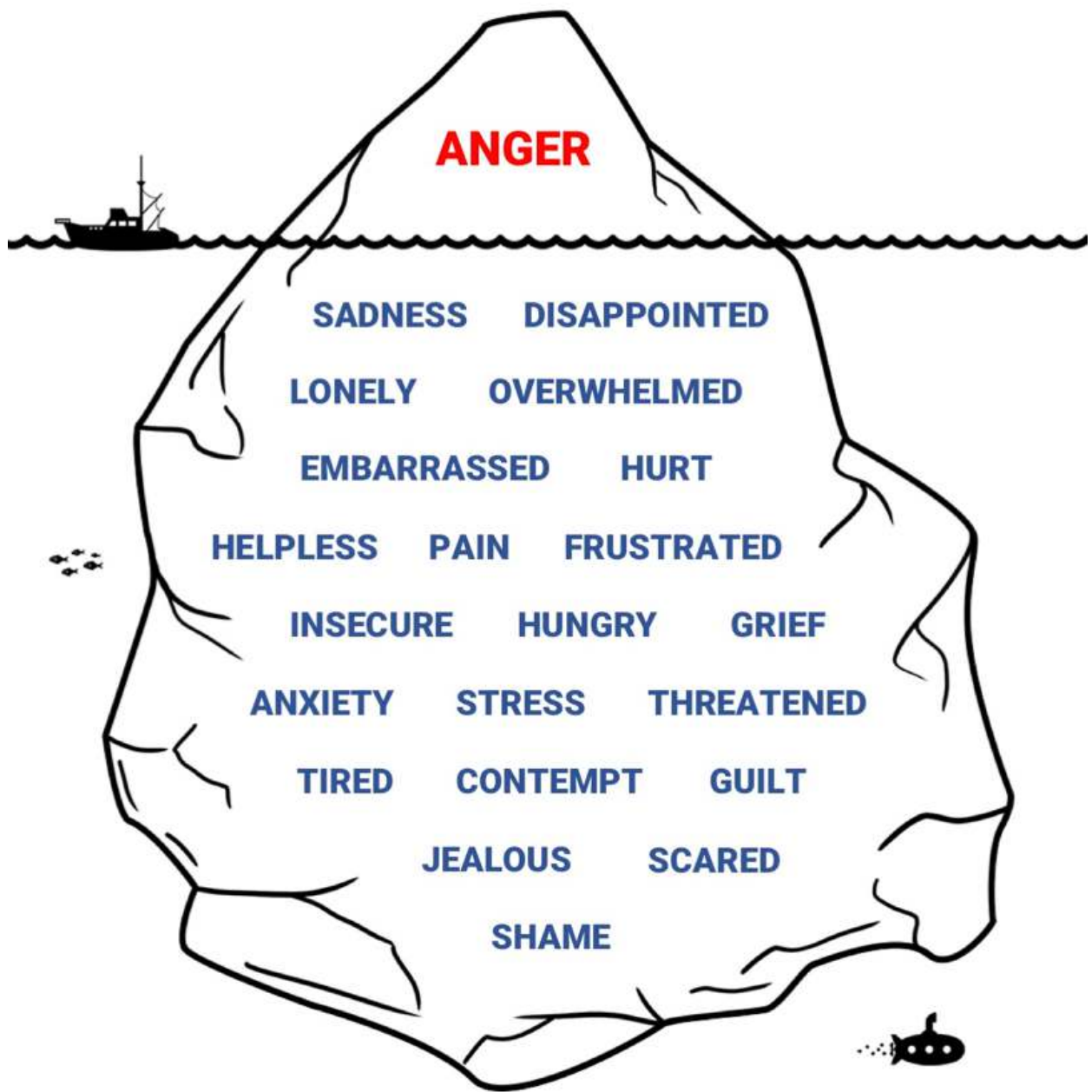


**Acts of
Service**



Physical Touch

BONUS: Want to know more about your communication styles? Check out the **Love Nudge app** on iPhone and Android. It's a version of the classic book *The Five Love Languages* that's easy to access and apply.



Budgeting With Clarity



Expenses

	Was: Last 3 Months' AVG.	Should Be: Optimal	How: Ideas for adjusting
Rent/Mortgage			
Utilities			
Cell Phone			
TV/Internet			
Netflix and others			
Car Payment			
Car Insurance			
Debt Payments (student loans, credit cards, etc.)			
Insurance Payments			
Childcare/Tuition			
Other Kids' Expenses			
Other Auto-Pay Expenses			
Other Fixed Expenses			
Groceries			
Eating Out/Fun			
Date Night / Marriage Investment			
Hobbies / Self-Investment			
Giving/Generosity			
Saving/Retirement			
Totals			

Income

	Was: Last 3 Months' AVG.	Should Be: Optimal	How: Ideas for adjusting
Day Jobs			
Side Hustles			
Other Sources			
Totals			

Follow-Up Questions

Discuss these questions together after completing the 'Budgeting with Clarity' worksheet on the other side.

What emotions get stirred up in you when we talk about money?

What grade do you give us for our ability and willingness to discuss money? (You may want to refer back to the Couple's Check-Up Activity)

How has our financial situation changes over the last year? How has it affected your emotions in regard to money?

What are some ways we've spend money in the past year that seem unwise or wasteful?

What are some ways we've spend money in the last year that seem wise or fulfilling?

Look at the two highlighted boxes on the other side of this sheet. What is the difference between those two numbers? What should we do about it?

Two Short-Term Goals (Next 6-12 Months)

Two Mid-Term Goals (Next 5-10 years)

Two Long-Range Goals (10-20 years / Retirement)

Next Steps	When?: Timeline for change	Who?: Who is responsible for making the change

Resources

Books:

- **Boundaries** - Cloud and Townsend
- **The Relationship Cure** - Gottman
- **Are My Kids On Track** - Goff and Thomas
- **Parenting** - Andy and Sandra Stanley
- **Know Yourself, Know Your Money** - Rachel Cruze

Podcast:

The Homeward Collective

A podcast with Pat Ward and his colleague Taryn Mau covering a wide range of mental and relationship health. No fluff, just helpful info.



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