



The Relationship Communication Playbook

A SELF-ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

Transform the Way You Communicate—Starting Today



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Why Communication Matters More Than You Think

Communication is the foundation of connection in every relationship. The way we speak, listen, and express emotions determines whether we build closeness or create distance.

Most relationship struggles aren't about love, they're about emotional breakdowns we don't know how to share. Misunderstandings, emotional disconnection, and recurring conflicts that stem from unseen communication patterns that often go unnoticed.

The challenge? We were never formally taught how to share our emotions in relationships.

If you've ever thought...

- *"No matter what I say, it turns into an argument."*
- *"I feel unheard, but when I speak up, it just makes things worse."*
- *"I avoid difficult conversations because they always end badly."*
- *"I don't know how to express my feelings without sounding needy or defensive."*

...then you're in the right place.

The good news? **Communication is a skill**, not a trait people are just born with. It can be learned.

Just like learning a language or an instrument, you can improve with the right tools and practice.

Understanding Principles & Skills in Communication

Principles are fundamental truths that help explain how something works. They shape our actions, decisions, and beliefs, serving as a guide for how we behave, communicate, and navigate life.

For example, the law of gravity is a principle: when we understand how it works, we can choose how we move with it. After all... what goes up, must come down.

The same applies to communication and relationships. When we understand the principles behind how communication works, we can move with them, not against them.

Below are core principles of communication, categorized into foundational skills that transform how we connect with others.

The 20 Core Principles of Healthy Communication

Foundations of Love —> “The Basics”

At our core, we are imperfect humans doing our best to navigate relationships, emotions, and connection. Yet, we often justify our own actions while assuming the worst in others doing the very same. Recognizing this shared humanity allows us to approach life and love with greater compassion for ourselves and each other.

1. We’re all in this together.

- ✓ Your partner isn’t the enemy, you’re on the same team.
- ✓ Conflict is an opportunity to learn, not a battle to win.

2. We’re all imperfect humans, yet we justify our own actions while assuming the worst in others doing the same.

- ✓ Extend the same grace to your partner that you give yourself.
- ✓ Assume positive intent until proven otherwise.

3. How you show up shapes your reality. Suffering or moments of magic, it’s your choice.

- ✓ The mindset you bring into a conversation influences the outcome, expect conflict, and you’ll find it; expect connection, and you’ll create it.
- ✓ Your words, tone, and energy set the stage for how your partner responds, choose presence, patience, and openness to invite deeper understanding.

4. Communication is a practice, not a pursuit of perfection. You do it, again and again.

- ✓ No one “graduates” from learning how to communicate, it’s an ongoing process.
- ✓ Conversations are dynamic; expect to adjust and learn along the way.

5. The goal of communication is understanding, even with ourselves.

- ✓ If I don’t understand myself, I can’t truly listen, I’ll compete for airtime instead.
- ✓ It’s my responsibility to translate my own thoughts and feelings into words.

6. We get better at love by practicing it, just like anything else.

- ✓ Communication is a skill that improves with effort and intention.
- ✓ There’s no “natural” at relationships, only those willing to learn.

The Art of Expression —> “Speaking”

Speaking is more than just expressing thoughts, it is a tool for self-discovery. Speaking from our own experience, without blame or assumption, creates space for deeper connection and trust. Thoughtful, intentional speech fosters real understanding and deepens relationships.

7. Speaking helps me understand myself; listening helps me understand others.

- ✓ Talking allows me to make sense of my own thoughts and emotions.
- ✓ Interrupting robs others of their own self-understanding.

8. When both people talk at once, it’s not a conversation, it’s a fight.

- ✓ Communication requires both a talker and a listener.
- ✓ If no one is listening, nothing is being understood.

9. You can share how you truly feel, as long as you own it. Speak it from your own experience.

- ✓ Use “I am noticing...” statements to express your feelings without blaming, say “I feel hurt when this happens” instead of “You always make me feel this way.”
- ✓ Take responsibility for your emotions and experiences rather than expecting your partner to fix them, clarity fosters connection, while blame creates distance.

10. Pause when conflict arises, take the time you need, but not a second more. Then get back to the good stuff.

- ✓ Reactivity escalates emotions; pausing allows for emotional regulation. It’s your communication “break pedal.”
- ✓ Avoidance isn’t clarity, step back, process, and return when ready.

11. As a speaker, get to the point. Listening is hard for everyone.

- ✓ Wandering explanations can exhaust the listener.
- ✓ Say what you need to say, then pause and listen.

The Power of Presence → “Listening”

Listening is more than just hearing words, it’s about creating space for understanding, connection, and trust. True listening begins with self-awareness and presence.

12. If I don’t understand myself, I can’t truly listen. Instead, I compete for airtime.

- ✓ Unclear thoughts and emotions lead to defensiveness and competition.
- ✓ Take the time you need to understand yourself, but not a second more.

13. Give first, give fast. Offering to listen first sets the tone for generosity, not competition.

- ✓ Leading with listening builds trust and reduces defensiveness in conversations.
- ✓ Being the first to offer understanding encourages your partner to do the same, creating a cycle of mutual respect.

14. Really listen. Stop defending. Otherwise, you make the conversation about you.

- ✓ If you're waiting to talk instead of listening, you're missing the point.
- ✓ Seek to understand, not just to respond.

Mastering Your Inner World —> “Emotional Regulation”

Emotional regulation is at the heart of healthy communication and deep relationships. It's not just about the words we speak, but how we respond to what is said. When we can manage our emotions, we create space for understanding rather than reaction, and the emotional safety necessary for meaningful conversations which leads to connection.

15. Vulnerability is your superpower. Without it, you are easily manipulated.

- ✓ True vulnerability is about sharing your feelings honestly, not just reacting emotionally.
- ✓ When you allow yourself to be seen, you create space for deeper connection.

16. Golden Rule: Feel how you feel, but don't take it out on others.

- ✓ Your emotions are valid, but your partner isn't responsible for them.
- ✓ Express, don't project. Managing your emotions creates emotional safety.

17. There are two ways to manage emotions: express them in words and find remedies, or take them out on others.

- ✓ Suppressing emotions leads to resentment and emotional outbursts, finding healthy outlets prevents buildup.
- ✓ Naming your emotions and sharing them with clarity creates deeper understanding and connection in your relationship.

18. Embracing our emotional differences expands our personal perspective; resisting them narrows it.

- ✓ Your partner's emotional experience is valid, even if it's different from yours, acceptance fosters empathy and connection.
- ✓ Seeing emotions as a strength rather than a weakness allows for growth and deeper intimacy.

19. The greatest gift of love is learning from it, failure only comes from avoiding it.

- ✓ Every conversation, even the difficult ones, is an opportunity to strengthen your bond.
- ✓ Avoiding tough discussions may feel easier in the moment but often leads to greater misunderstandings and disconnection over time.

20. Romantic relationships are deeply emotional and require skill to master.

- ✓ Love isn't just about chemistry, it's about learning, practicing, and refining relationship skills.
- ✓ The strongest couples are those who actively work on their communication, emotional regulation, and connection.

Self-Assessment: How Well Do You Communicate?

Instructions: Rate yourself on a scale from **1 (Rarely)** to **5 (Always)** for each statement.

👉 Be honest with yourself. This is not about judgment, it's about identifying areas where you can sincerely improve and grow.

Rarely
1 2 3 4 5
Always

Section 1: Expressing Yourself Clearly

... Do I communicate my thoughts and emotions clearly?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I express my feelings without blaming, shaming, or assuming my partner's malicious intent.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I can describe my emotions beyond basic words like "mad, sad, or frustrated."

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I take time to process my thoughts before speaking especially in emotionally charged moments.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I share my needs in a way that invites permission to choose, rather than demands for compliance.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I avoid passive-aggressive comments.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I can discuss difficult topics, and when I get overwhelmed by emotions, I am able to pause the conversation; but come back to it as quickly as I can.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I make requests instead of issuing complaints or ultimatums when I need something from my partner.

Section 2: Listening & Understanding Your Partner

💡 Do I create emotional safety for my partner through intentional listening?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I listen without interrupting, correcting, or mentally preparing my response while my partner is speaking.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I ask clarifying questions before assuming my partner's intent.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I validate my partner's emotions, even if I don't fully understand or agree with them.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I make space for my partner's emotions without dismissing or minimizing them.

Rarely Always

1 2 3 4 5

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I stay present in a conversation rather than emotionally withdrawing or reacting defensively; or I disclose I am not listening and pause the conversation until I can be present.

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When my partner shares something difficult, I listen with curiosity instead of reacting with defensiveness or criticism.

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I resist the urge to "fix" my partner's emotions and instead offer support.

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When I don't fully understand, I make a point to reflect back what I heard or ask clarifying questions before responding to ensure I understand.

Section 3: Managing Conflict & Emotional Regulation

⚡ Do I regulate my emotions in such a way I feel GOOD about my words and actions?

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I pause before reacting when I feel emotionally triggered.

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I can recognize when my emotions are influencing how I interpret my partner's words.

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I avoid shutting down or stonewalling when conversations feel intense.

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I advocate and honor healthy boundaries when discussing difficult topics.

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I can disagree without becoming disrespectful or defensive.

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I know how to calm myself down when emotions start to escalate.

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I avoid keeping score in arguments and focus on resolving the issue at hand.

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I know when to step away from a conversation to cool down before returning to it.

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I address one topic at a time and stay aware when the conversation starts to pile up.

Section 4: Repair & Rebuilding Connection

♥ Do I take accountability and do my part to repair emotional disconnects?

Rarely Always

1 2 3 4 5

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I take responsibility for my mistakes and offer meaningful apologies.

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I can distinguish between needing space to process and avoiding hard conversations.

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I follow up after difficult conversations to ensure mutual understanding.

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I make an effort to reconnect emotionally after disagreements.

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I check in with my partner about how we're doing rather than assuming we're fine.

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I recognize that avoiding conflict does not create intimacy, it erodes it.

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I intentionally create moments of connection outside of resolving conflict.

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I work on improving communication instead of assuming it will improve on its own.

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I set the tone for the conversation, and know how to lower defensiveness.

How to Total Your Score

Instructions:

1. Go through the self-assessment and write down the number (1-5) you selected for each statement.
2. Add up all your scores to get your total score.
3. Use your total score to find your results below.

Scoring Guide:

- There are 33 questions in total.
- Each question is worth 1 to 5 points.
- The highest possible score is 165 points (strong communication skills).
- The lowest possible score is 33 points (communication needs improvement).

Results & Next Steps

💡 Total your score and match it to the categories below to assess where you stand in your communication skills.

130–165 Points: Communication is a Strength, But There's Always Room to Grow

- ✓ You have strong communication habits and emotional intelligence.
- ✓ You likely already navigate tough conversations with clarity and emotional regulation.
- ✓ Your challenge is refining and deepening your skills, especially in high-stakes or emotionally charged discussions.

◆ Where to Focus Next:

- **Master Advanced Listening Techniques:** Try paraphrasing before responding (“What I hear you saying is...”)
- **Increase Emotional Intimacy:** Ask your partner deeper questions like, “What’s something you’ve never told me but wish I knew?”
- **Handle Stressful Conversations With Ease:** Pay attention to micro-escalations, small defensive reactions that snowball into bigger fights.

💡 Exercises to Try:

- ✓ **The 5-Minute Reflection Rule** → Before responding in a tense discussion, pause for five minutes and write down how you feel.
- ✓ **Weekly Relationship Check-Ins** → Set aside 15 minutes a week to ask your partner:
 - What’s something I did this week that made you feel loved?
 - Is there anything I did that hurt or frustrated you?
 - What’s one thing we can do to improve our connection?

💡 Resources to Deepen Your Growth:

- ➡ Explore **The Blueprint for Avoiding Divorce** if your relationship is still struggling despite strong communication.
- ➡ Read “Nonviolent Communication” by Marshall Rosenberg to refine your conflict resolution approach.

100–129 Points: Communication is Decent, But Breakdowns Happen

⚠️ You do well in some areas, but breakdowns likely occur during:

- Conflicts or emotional discussions where tensions rise.
- Moments of stress, when patience wears thin.
- Conversations about sensitive topics where past wounds and triggers resurface.

◆ Where to Focus Next:

- **Recognize Your Triggers:** What specific phrases or behaviors from your partner cause an emotional reaction in you?
- **Strengthen Your Conflict Navigation Skills:** Learn to say: “I need a moment to think before I respond,” instead of reacting immediately.
- **Shift Your Communication Goal:** Are you trying to “win” the argument or create understanding?

💡 Exercises to Try:

- ✓ **Practice “The 3:1 Positivity Ratio”** → For every one criticism, aim to express three positive affirmations in daily conversations.
- ✓ **Create a “Pause Phrase”** → Before engaging in conflict, agree on a phrase that signals a cool-down moment (e.g., “Let’s pause for a second”).

💡 Resources to Deepen Your Growth:

- ➡ Practice conflict resolution with **“The Love in Limbo: 30-Day Roadmap”** if space or separation is a factor in your relationship, or join The Better Love Club for Couples.
- ➡ Try the book “Crucial Conversations” to learn how to stay calm and articulate during high-stakes discussions.

70–99 Points: Communication Struggles Are Creating Distance

⚠️ **Your relationship may feel tense, disconnected, or emotionally draining because conversations:**

- Turn into fights, avoidance, or miscommunication loops.
- Feel repetitive, like the same arguments are happening over and over.
- Interactions lead to more frustration than resolution.

💡 Where to Focus Next:

- **Become Aware of Your Communication Patterns: Do you:**
 - Shut down when things get emotional?
 - Get defensive instead of hearing your partner out?
 - Raise your voice or interrupt when frustrated?
- **Strengthen Emotional Regulation:** When upset, try the “Name It to Tame It” method:
 - Instead of reacting immediately, take a pause to identify what you’re thinking and feeling.
 - Say it out loud: *“I feel overwhelmed right now, I need a minute to collect my thoughts.”*
 - This reduces emotional reactivity and creates space for clarity.

💡 Exercises to Try:

- ✓ **30-Second Validation Exercise** → Every time your partner speaks, respond with:
 - *“That makes sense, I can see why you feel that way.”*
 - *“I hear you saying that when I do ____, you feel _____. Did I get that right?”*
- ✓ **The “Gentle Start-Up” Technique** → Instead of criticism, start discussions with curiosity and softness:
 - ✗ *“You never listen to me!”* → ✓ *“I feel unheard sometimes, can we talk about that?”*

💡 Resources to Deepen Your Growth:

- ➡ Start **The Blueprint for Avoiding Divorce** if you’re in a strained marriage that needs a reset.
- ➡ Explore “Attached” by Amir Levine & Rachel Heller if emotional disconnection is a pattern in your relationship.

40–69 Points: Communication is a Major Source of Conflict

 **You feel unheard, frustrated, or even like communication is impossible because:**

- Conversations escalate into fights quickly.
- You or your partner withdraw rather than talk things out.
- There's a growing emotional distance between you.

◆ **Where to Focus Next:**

- **Break the Pattern of Reactivity:** Learn to identify when your tone, body language, or choice of words are escalating the conversation.
- **Rebuild Emotional Safety:** If communication feels unsafe, work on small moments of positive interaction before tackling big conflicts.
- **Clarify Unspoken Expectations:** Many arguments stem from misaligned assumptions.

Ask yourself:

- What am I expecting my partner to do, but I haven't clearly asked for it?
- Am I assuming their actions mean something negative without asking them first?

 **Exercises to Try:**

✓ **"The 24-Hour Rule" for Conflict** → If a conversation gets heated, pause and return to it the next day.

✓ **Write a Letter Instead of Speaking First** → If verbal conversations keep escalating, write down your thoughts to share them instead.

 **Resources to Deepen Your Growth:**

➡ Join **"The Love in Limbo: 30-Day Roadmap"** if separation or emotional distance is a factor.

➡ Consider adding **The Better Love Club** for extra support to improve communication issues that have become a deep-seated problem.

Final Thoughts: Communication is the Pathway to Connection

★ Communication isn't just about talking, it's about emotional regulation from understanding yourself. This creates emotional safety which then leads to bonding. Small changes can have big impacts on your relationship.

♥ **Your Personalized Action Plan**

✓ **If you're navigating space or separation:**

- Start with **The Love in Limbo: 30-Day Roadmap** to avoid pushing your partner further away.
- Focus on reconnection with yourself before initiating conversations.

✓ **If your relationship is struggling and feels stuck:**

- **The Blueprint for Avoiding Divorce** provides a structured approach to rebuilding communication and emotional safety.
- Commit to one new communication habit per week instead of trying to fix everything at once.

✓ **If you want to strengthen your emotional connection:**

- Set up a weekly check-in conversation with your partner using the "Relationship Check-In" prompts above.

No matter where you are, progress is possible. The first step? Intentional action.

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

-George Bernard Shaw