Couples Talk Steps

Safe. Gentle. One at a time. Pause. Repair. One small step.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1. Safety check

Both safe? If not, get help.

2. Pick a time

Calm, private, not at night.

3. One exercise

Small topic first.

4. Start gently

Situation, feeling, need.

5. Take turns

Speak short. Listener sums up.

6. Pause

Flooded? Break, then return.

7. Repair

Sorry, restart, a soft touch.

8. One step

Try one thing this week.

9. Review

What helped? What next?

Harsh start vs gentle start

Describe the situation, name your feeling, ask for a positive need.

Harsh Blame, always, never	"You never help with anything."
Gentle Feeling plus request	"I'm wiped out. Could you do the dishes?"
Repair Slows the fight	"Can we start over? That came out wrong."

For conflict between two safe partners. Not for violence, threats or control.

DV Hotline 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788 · 988 · HOME to 741741 · 911

A practice tool. It does not replace couples therapy.

Our Talk Plan

Gentle start. Speaker and listener. Timeout. Repair phrases.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Gentle start rewrite

My usual harsh start: _____

I feel _____ when _____

and I would like _____

Topic size today: Small / Medium / Big (with therapist)

Speaker and listener rules

Speaker holds the floor. Short chunks. Speak for yourself.

Listener sums up in own words. No arguing, no fixing yet.

Switch when the speaker says: "Yes, that's it."

Our floor object: _____

Our timeout plan

Our signal: _____ Break: 20 min or more

We come back by: _____ (never more than 24 h)

Partner A calms by: _____

Partner B calms by: _____

Repair phrases

I can say: _____

I like to hear: _____

Our one small step this week: _____

What I heard my partner say (summary)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Afraid of your partner? 1-800-799-7233 · START to 88788 · 911

Original layout by Lotus & Tulip, based on published couple communication research. Not therapy.

Free printable from Lotus & Tulip · lotustulip.com/communication-exercises-for-couples.html

Weekly Practice Log

Six weeks. One exercise. Calm rating. What helped. One appreciation.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Week	Exercise	Calm 0-10	What helped	Appreciation
# 1				
# 2				
# 3				
# 4				
# 5				
# 6				

Curiosity and repair cards (cut out, take turns)

Curious A highlight this week?	Curious A worry not yet shared?	Curious A dream for us?
Curious Best day together?	Curious How can I help?	Curious What makes you feel loved?
Repair Can we start over?	Repair I see your point.	Repair I need a hug.

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