Communication Boundaries And Connection Worksheet

A supportive worksheet for clarifying needs, language, consent, repair, and respectful limits.

Use this at your own pace. Skip, adapt, pause, or stop. You are allowed to choose what fits your body, culture, privacy, energy, safety, access needs, and real-life limits today.

This is a reflection tool, not a test. One honest sentence, one checked box, or one small next step can be enough.

Communication Boundaries And Connection

Worksheet

A printable reflection and practice resource

A Gentle Worksheet For Couples

Communication Boundaries

and Connection Provided by Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC

- Use this worksheet to make conversations more respectful and manageable. Start with a small, everyday topic.
- Choose only two items and one short ritual; you do not need to complete every page or solve everything

_____
_____ today.

Safety and choice come first Use together only when both people can say no, disagree, and take space without fear. If there is intimidation, threats, forced sexual contact, physical harm, blocked exits, monitoring, or punishment for speaking honestly, stop the joint exercise and seek private professional or relationship-safety support. Couples exercises may be unsafe when abuse or coercive control is present. [2] Do not confront a partner or announce a boundary if doing so could put you at risk. A private safety plan takes priority. You do not need to disclose trauma, prove fear, forgive, make eye contact, accept touch, or finish a conversation to deserve respect.

Know what you are choosing A boundary describes what I will do to protect my participation: "If name-calling starts, I will pause the conversation when I can do so safely." It does not require permission, but stating it may not be safe in every relationship.

A shared agreement is something we both freely choose, such as one topic at a time. A communication tip is a skill to try, not a rule for grading or policing a partner.

Neither person is responsible for managing the other person's emotions. A trauma history may help explain reactions; it does not excuse harm. Communication differences do not make insults or intimidation acceptable.

One thing that helps me feel respected or at ease Quick start: Read pages 2 and 3, choose two items, and try the short ritual on page 4. Use page 5 only if writing feels helpful.

Resources and limits are on page 6.

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CHOOSE TWO TO START (cid:127) ITEMS 1 TO 10

Twenty choices for calmer conversations These are examples, not demands. Adapt the words to your voice. Use boundary scripts only when safe. A pause is not a punishment or a way to force agreement.

1. Protect dignity (boundary)

"I can discuss a specific concern. If I am called selfish, stupid, or other names, I will pause." Address behavior without judging a person's worth.

2. Pause when overwhelmed (boundary)

"I am losing my ability to listen. I need a break before I continue." You do not have to prove that you are overwhelmed.

3. Respect physical space (agreement)

"When either of us pauses, we will not follow, corner, block the exit, or take the other person's phone." Interference is a safety concern, not a communication mistake.

4. Choose a workable time (boundary)

"I cannot give this attention now. I can offer ten minutes after dinner." Offer another time when safe and realistic; avoid indefinite avoidance.

5. Check willingness first (tip)

"Is now an okay time for a short conversation?" A no or not yet is useful information, not rejection.

6. Keep one topic in view (agreement)

"Let's stay with this one issue and save the other concern for another time." Write it down only if both find that helpful.

7. Make room for both voices (agreement)

"Let's let each other finish a short thought before responding." Do not turn speaking time into a contest or a lecture.

8. Ask before advising (tip)

"Would you like listening, comfort, or ideas?" You can also say, "I just want you to hear me right now."

9. Keep trauma disclosure optional (boundary)

"I am not ready to explain that part of my history. I can tell you what I need now." No one owes personal details to justify a limit.

10. Keep touch optional (boundary)

"Please ask before touching me when I am upset. I may prefer space." A hug, eye contact, or physical affection is never required.

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CHOOSE TWO TO START (cid:127) ITEMS 11 TO 20

Twenty choices for calmer conversations Each person owns their choices and follow-through. These tools should increase freedom and respect, not become another way to supervise each other.

11. Protect private disclosures (boundary)

"If things I share in therapy are used to shame or threaten me, I will stop this exercise and seek private support." Retaliation needs a safety assessment.

12. Avoid arguments by text (boundary)

"I am stepping away from this argument by text. I can revisit it at a safer, agreed time." Keep necessary practical messages brief.

13. Discuss events rather than identities (tip)

"When our plan changed without telling me, I felt left out. Can we check in next time?" Replace "You always" with one specific example.

14. Ask rather than direct (tip)

"Could we decide together what needs to happen and by when?" A request leaves room for an answer; avoid correcting every step.

15. Share ownership of tasks (agreement)

"Who will own this task, including remembering and following through?" Neither partner should have to supervise the other.

16. Allow different ways of doing things (tip)

"Is this about safety, an agreement, or my preference?" For low-stakes preferences, allow a different method; shared standards still matter.

17. Keep outside support available (boundary)

"I will seek support from a trusted person or professional when I need it." Privacy is not a rule requiring secrecy about harm.

18. Allow disagreement (boundary)

"I hear that you feel differently. I will not keep debating my right to have a need or opinion." Understanding does not require agreement.

19. Make repair specific (tip)

"I interrupted and spoke harshly. I am sorry. I want to try that sentence again." Name your behavior without "but you"; forgiveness is not owed.

20. End without forced resolution (boundary)

"I am finished for now. We can decide when and how to revisit this safely." No forced apology, affection, sex, or instant forgiveness.

Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC 3 / 6 KEEP IT LIGHT (cid:127) ABOUT TEN MINUTES IF THAT FEELS COMFORTABLE A small ritual from start to finish Choose a familiar setting: tea at the table, sitting on the porch, or a short walk if both feel comfortable. Avoid

_____
_____ difficult talks while driving or anywhere a person feels trapped. A timer is optional; use it only if both find it helpful.

Arrive and invite for about two minutes Shift out of work mode. Change clothes, wash your hands, listen to a song, or take a quiet moment. Try: "I am home now. We can share responsibility here." For someone who directs others all day, this is a transition cue, not a criticism of their profession.

Invite rather than assign. "Would a few minutes together feel okay? Do you want company or space first?" Either person can decline. Choose a low-stakes topic and a comfortable distance. Eyes open, movement, or simply noticing the room are options; breathing exercises are optional.

Connect for about five minutes Each person shares one feeling and one need: "Today I felt ___. Something that would help is ___." The listener tries: "What I hear is ___. Did I get that right?" Then switch. Ask before offering a solution; choose one small next step only if both want one.

- Keep it human. Use your own words. A warm drink, shared music, or kind humor can help if both enjoy it.

Skip

teasing, scorekeeping, worksheets during a date, and surprise relationship reviews. You can stop after one useful sentence.

Pause if either person needs space Choose a neutral phrase such as "I need a pause." If safe, agree on a time to check back. A break of at least 20 _____ _____ _____ _____ minutes may help; it is not a deadline for being calm. Walk, listen to music, or rest separately. Avoid pursuing, arguing by text, or preparing a rebuttal. At check-in, resume only if both are ready; otherwise arrange another time or professional support. [3] Finish for about two minutes Each person can name one thing they understood. Ask: "Are we done for now, or do we need another time?" End with an optional ordinary activity: a snack, a show, or separate quiet time. Appreciation is welcome when sincere; no hug, apology, or agreement is required.

After a therapy session Before leaving, ask the therapist to help each person settle and agree on a transition plan. If safe, choose a period without replaying the session, such as 30 to 60 minutes, then check willingness to talk. Tell the therapist privately about fear, retaliation, or worsening arguments; these require reassessment, not more homework.

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OPTIONAL WRITING (cid:127) TRY ONCE AND ADJUST

Our small experiment Complete separately first if preferred. Share only what feels safe. Choose one calm moment this week, not daily homework. Do not use these answers to monitor, grade, or win an argument.

Two items I want to try and what they would sound like in my own words My early signs of overload and one thing that helps me settle Our invitation and simple ritual such as tea or a short porch visit Our pause phrase and how we will check back without pressure If a boundary is not respected my safe next step or support person is Our plan for leaving therapy and getting through the next hour After trying it what felt easier and what should we change or stop A reminder of worth: "I can take responsibility for a specific action without accepting

a hurtful label. My needs matter. I do not have to earn respectful treatment by communicating perfectly." Progress can be one respected pause, fewer insults, or more freedom to disagree. If you feel more afraid, pressured, or diminished, stop joint practice and seek private support.

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KEEP THIS PAGE (cid:127) UNITED STATES RESOURCES

Support resources and important limits When help is needed now

_____
_____ 911: Call for immediate danger, a life-threatening situation, or a medical emergency when you can do so safely.

Outside the United States, use your local emergency number. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988 for suicidal thoughts, mental health or substance-use crisis, or emotional distress. Support is available 24/7. Chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also reach out about someone you are worried about. [4] National Domestic Violence Hotline: Call 800-799-7233, text START to 88788, or visit thehotline.org for relationship-safety support and safety planning. You do not have to be certain that what you are experiencing is abuse to ask for help. Use a safer device if your communications may be monitored. [2] Disclaimers and guidance for use This worksheet is general education and a discussion aid. It is not a diagnosis, a validated assessment, a standardized treatment protocol, an individualized safety plan, or a substitute for assessment and care from a qualified professional. It does not promise fewer arguments or relationship repair.

The scripts and rituals are optional examples. Adapt them to culture, language, disability, sensory needs, and personal preference. No one should be pressured to participate, disclose trauma, reconcile, stay in a relationship, or accept responsibility for another person's harmful behavior.

For the treating professional: Review fit and assess fear, coercive control, violence, and retaliation privately before assigning joint work. Do not assume equal responsibility for abuse. Increased conflict after sessions calls for reassessment, consultation, and appropriate referral. Review this handout before distribution.

Completing or sharing this worksheet does not create a clinician-client relationship. Do not use a completed worksheet as an emergency message or assume it is monitored. Store it only where safe; writing personal details is optional. Crisis-service privacy policies and emergency-response practices vary.

Sources and further reading [1] SAMHSA. Trauma-Informed Approaches and Programs. Safety, trust, collaboration, and voice and choice inform this worksheet. [2] National Domestic Violence Hotline. Should I Go To Couples Therapy With My Abusive Partner? and support resources. [3] The Gottman Institute. Love Smarter by Learning When to Take a Break. [4] 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Original educational worksheet. The listed organizations did not author or endorse it. Resources checked September 19, 2026.

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Safety, Privacy & Educational Use

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If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency: Call 911 in the United States or use your local emergency number. For U.S. suicide or mental-health crisis support, call or text 988. For relationship-safety support, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233, text START to 88788, or visit TheHotline.org from a safer device when possible.

_____
_____ Privacy and safer searching If someone may monitor your device, accounts, internet connection, location, downloads, or browser activity, consider using a safer device and a trusted network. Private browsing may reduce locally saved history but does not make activity invisible. Clearing history can also be noticed. A website Quick Exit button changes the page; it cannot erase browser, download, router, account, employer, school, carrier, or device records. Choose only steps that feel safer in your situation.

Do not store identifying or safety-sensitive answers where another person may find them.

Educational scope and professional limits This resource provides general psychoeducation, reflection, and wellness support. It is not therapy, counseling, diagnosis, assessment, treatment, medical advice, legal advice, crisis response, forensic evaluation, or an individualized safety plan.

It does not replace care from a licensed clinician, healthcare professional, attorney, trained advocate, emergency service, or other qualified professional. Laws, court procedures, services, and risks vary by location and circumstance.

Choice, pacing, and inclusion You may skip, change, discuss, dictate, draw, pause, or stop any activity. No exercise can determine what you experienced, diagnose a condition, prove a legal claim, guarantee safety, or tell you whether to stay, leave, report, reconcile, forgive, or pursue court action. Adapt language and activities for culture, identity, disability, neurotype, age, literacy, sensory needs, and personal preference. Automatic translation can make mistakes; confirm legal, medical, emergency, and safety-critical wording with a qualified person.

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