

Invite a Difficult Conversation

Couples communication and boundaries | Clinicians | 10 to 15 minutes

Help partners negotiate whether and how to discuss one manageable concern.

Use after separate assessment supports the safety and suitability of conjoint work. This script models permission, pacing, and a specific request. It is a flexible example rather than a requirement to use exact words.

Invite choice

Clinician: "Would practicing a short conversation about one manageable concern be useful today? Either of you can pass or pause." If a partner declines: "Thank you for being clear. What would make this time useful instead?" Do not seek a yes through pressure.

Coach a clear opening

Clinician to speaker: "Name one event, its effect on you, and an action you would like to request." Example: "When plans change at the last minute, I feel unprepared. Could we send a message when the timing changes?" Clinician to listener: "What did you hear the request to be?"

Respond to different needs

If the listener disagrees: "You can understand the request and still have limits. What could you agree to?" If either person becomes overwhelmed: "Let us stop the practice. Would quiet, a different topic, or a pause help?" If fear or coercion emerges, end the joint exercise and arrange private safety assessment.

Review the process

Ask: "What helped you feel able to choose? What felt pressuring? What is one action each of you freely agrees to try?" Record each person's own account rather than declaring mutual agreement when it is absent.

Language I will adapt for this couple