Couples: communication and repair | Understand

Before We Have the Conversation

Adult couples | 5 to 8 minutes | Handout

Choose whether, when, and how to discuss one manageable disagreement.

A useful conversation starts with a real choice to participate. Read this page separately or together. You do not have to resolve a disagreement today, and either partner may ask to stop.

How to use this page

Choose an everyday issue with low stakes. Avoid beginning with a frightening, dangerous, or highly charged event. Agree on a time when neither person is rushing.

Permission first

Ask whether now is a workable time, how long you both have, and which way of responding feels easiest. Spoken words, writing, or a supported conversation may work differently for each person. A pause is available to both partners.

One issue, two accounts

Describe the event you want to discuss without deciding what it proves about the other person. Your partner may remember it differently. Listening to their account does not require agreeing with every detail. Aim to understand one need before proposing a solution.

A shared stopping point

Choose a simple pause phrase and a time to check whether both people want to return. No one should follow, block, or punish someone for pausing. If honesty or saying no could bring retaliation, do not use a joint exercise; seek separate specialist support.

1. One thing that would make a conversation more workable for me

Original educational material. Not a validated assessment or treatment protocol.

PK06-01 | continued

Facilitator notes and adaptation

Privately assess safety and voluntary participation. These communication prompts are unsuitable for coercive control or abuse. Do not equate calm speech with safety.

About this resource

AI-assisted original draft for More Than Therapy. Version 1.0. Source and editorial checks: 27 October 2026. Independent clinical review pending; no human clinical reviewer is recorded. The references below inform concepts and do not validate or endorse this original page.

Conceptual references

PB01 | The Gottman Institute | Six Tips for the Six Skills of Conflict Management

https://www.gottman.com/blog/manage-conflict-the-six-skills/

PB02 | National Domestic Violence Hotline | Should I Go To Couples Therapy With My Abusive Partner?

https://www.thehotline.org/resources/should-i-go-to-couples-therapy-with-my-abusive-partner/

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