

THE PRACTICE PACKS / PK06

Couples: communication and repair

Make room for two perspectives.

Practice a manageable conversation with clear requests, listening, and an agreed pause. A fictional example, individual reflection, rehearsal, and review help partners choose what fits their relationship.

Adult couples | 7 original resources

A sequence you can adapt

Explore an explanation or fictional example. Choose an activity, rehearse, try an optional practice, and review what helped. Use the facilitator guide to adapt the sequence; every page is optional.

Choose with care

Check privately for fear, coercion, and retaliation before joint work. Use separate specialist support when safety is uncertain; do not frame abuse as a shared communication problem. Offer written turns, interpretation, or extra processing time and avoid requiring eye contact.

Large print fillable edition

Type into response areas and save a separate copy in a PDF reader that supports forms.

Inside this pack

1. Before We Have the Conversation

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

2. Two Plans for Saturday: A Worked Example

See a fictional couple turn a vague argument into a specific, revisable request.

3. From Friction to a Clear Request

Prepare one concrete request without assuming your partner's intentions.

4. Listen, Check, Then Respond

Rehearse a brief exchange in which each partner checks what they heard.

5. One Small Agreement to Try

Design an optional, brief experiment that both partners can revise.

6. What Did Our Experiment Teach Us?

Review a shared plan without assigning a relationship score.

7. Facilitating a Safe, Focused Couples Practice

Select and adapt a brief communication exercise within appropriate couples care.

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.

PK06-01 | continued

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**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?

PK06-01 | continued

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

Couples: communication and repair | Example

Two Plans for Saturday: A Worked Example

Adult couples | 5 to 8 minutes | Handout

See a fictional couple turn a vague argument into a specific, revisable request.

This is a fictional example, not a client story. Dani and Morgan both want a less rushed weekend. Their disagreement is about planning time, and both can freely disagree or stop.

How to use this page

Read the sequence. Notice what each person learns, what remains unresolved, and why their small agreement is only a trial.

What happened

Dani made plans for Saturday without checking first. Morgan said, "I had hoped we would decide together. I feel left out when the plan is already set." Dani initially replied, "You never suggest anything." They noticed the conversation expanding and chose to pause.

A different second try

Later, Dani said, "I made the booking before asking. I can see why that landed badly. I was worried we would miss the chance." Morgan reflected that concern, then asked for an earlier check-in. Dani asked how to make that practical when work schedules change.

PK06-02 | continued

The trial agreement

They chose a ten-minute planning check on Thursday. Either could decline an activity; attending separately remained an option. They did not settle every disagreement about time together. On Sunday they would ask whether the check-in felt useful and change it if it added pressure.

1. What did this pair do that could be adapted, or would not fit your situation?

Facilitator notes and adaptation

Do not offer this example as a promise of repair or as evidence that respectful wording makes abuse safe. Partners need separate support when there is fear or coercion.

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PK06-02 | continued

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Couples: communication and repair | Explore

From Friction to a Clear Request

Adult couples | 8 to 10 minutes | Worksheet

Prepare one concrete request without assuming your partner's intentions.

Use this page on your own first. Choose a small, recent disagreement. Write only what you want to share, and keep a private version if that is more comfortable.

How to use this page

Complete the three response areas. You can stop after preparing the request; sharing it is optional and depends on safety and mutual willingness.

Separate the event from its meaning

Start with something observable, such as a changed plan or an unfinished task. Then notice the meaning you gave it. "I waited without an update" and "I do not matter" are different kinds of statements. Both may be important, but your partner cannot confirm your inner meaning for you.

Name the need and the invitation

Consider whether you need information, rest, practical help, closeness, or more choice. Ask for an action the other person could understand. Leave space for a different proposal. A request allows an honest no; an agreement needs both people's consent.

PK06-03 | continued

Plan for a pause

Decide what you will do if either person becomes unable to listen.
Preparing a request does not oblige you to tolerate insults or pressure.
Seek private support if making a request could place you at risk.

1. The observable event, and the meaning I gave it**2. The need I want understood, and one specific request****3. How I will invite a response or pause the conversation**

PK06-03 | continued**Facilitator notes and adaptation**

Help partners distinguish needs from demands while validating unfair workload, discrimination, access needs, and other real circumstances. Check safety separately.

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Couples: communication and repair | Rehearse

Listen, Check, Then Respond

Adult couples | 10 to 15 minutes | Clinician script

Rehearse a brief exchange in which each partner checks what they heard.

Use this practice only when both partners freely agree and feel safe. The aim is to understand a small concern. A therapist may guide the timing or offer written turns.

How to use this page

Pick a low-stakes topic such as sharing space or scheduling. Agree that either person can pass, restart, or end the practice. Do not use a past traumatic event.

The first turn

Speaker: describe one event, its effect on you, and one hope for the conversation. Listener: offer a short summary in your own words. Ask, "What have I missed?" The speaker can correct the summary without having to prove the entire history.

The response

Listener: once the speaker feels understood enough, explain your own perspective or ask a clarifying question. Speaker: listen for something new. Understanding is not the same as accepting blame or promising a change that is impossible.

PK06-04 | continued

Switch and close

Switch roles if both want to continue. End with either a small next step or a clear statement that more discussion is needed. If either person feels pressured, stop. A facilitator should address the conditions of the conversation before returning to communication practice.

1. A phrase that helped me feel heard, or a change I would request next time**Facilitator notes and adaptation**

Never instruct a partner to disclose fear in front of the other partner. Coercion, threats, or retaliation require separate assessment and specialist support.

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PK06-04 | continued

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Couples: communication and repair | Practice

One Small Agreement to Try

Adult couples | 5 to 10 minutes | Worksheet

Design an optional, brief experiment that both partners can revise.

Choose one practical agreement after a conversation, or prepare an idea to discuss later. The agreement should make daily life more workable for both people, not measure who cares more.

How to use this page

Each partner may suggest, decline, or change the plan. Keep the first trial short. Use the response areas to make expectations visible.

Make the action specific

A trial might be checking a shared calendar once, agreeing on quiet time, or asking before offering advice. Say who will do what and when. If responsibilities are unequal, name the real distribution of time, money, or caregiving instead of assuming the same task is equally easy for both.

Build in a smaller option

Decide what happens if work, health, or another demand interrupts the plan. A smaller action or a later conversation may be more useful than silently abandoning it. Nobody needs to prove commitment by exhausting themselves.

PK06-05 | continued

Choose a review point

Set a time to ask whether the agreement helped. Either person can say it did not. Keep observations about the plan separate from judgments about the relationship. If a check-in becomes monitoring, punishment, or control, stop the exercise and seek separate support.

1. Our optional trial: action, person, and timing**2. A smaller option or adjustment if circumstances change****3. When we will review it, and how either person can ask to stop**

PK06-05 | continued**Facilitator notes and adaptation**

Confirm that participation and withdrawal are voluntary. Do not turn worksheets into compliance contracts or evidence against a partner.

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Couples: communication and repair | Review

What Did Our Experiment Teach Us?

Adult couples | 5 to 10 minutes | Worksheet

Review a shared plan without assigning a relationship score.

This page is useful whether you tried the plan, tried part of it, or never started. Each person can answer privately before deciding what to discuss.

How to use this page

Return to one agreement. Describe what actually happened, then choose whether to keep, change, pause, or retire it. You do not need a positive result.

Look for useful details

Recall a specific moment. Did the plan reduce confusion, make a need visible, or add work? Different answers can both contain useful information. Avoid deciding that an unfinished task proves someone's intention or character.

Find the missing condition

If the plan did not happen, check time, energy, clarity, access, and willingness. Perhaps the reminder was easy to miss, the task was too large, or the agreement was not truly shared. Discuss one condition that could change rather than making a longer list of failures.

PK06-06 | continued

Decide what comes next

Keep a helpful part, revise one detail, or let the experiment end. An unresolved issue may need a supported conversation. If either person felt watched, threatened, or punished, prioritize private safety support instead of improving the exercise.

1. What happened, including any different experiences we had**2. What supported or obstructed the plan****3. Our choice now: keep, change, pause, or stop, and why**

PK06-06 | continued**Facilitator notes and adaptation**

Protect separate perspectives. This review is not an outcome measure and should not be used to assess relationship safety or assign equal responsibility for harm.

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Couples: communication and repair | Facilitate

Facilitating a Safe, Focused Couples Practice

Mental health professionals | 10 to 20 minutes | Session guide

Select and adapt a brief communication exercise within appropriate couples care.

This guide is for qualified professionals choosing whether one of the pack's activities fits current care. It is not a couples assessment, a treatment model, or a substitute for specialist competence.

How to use this page

Use the steps as a preparation and debrief aid. Allocate time separately for assessment, privacy, and any required follow-up; the stated duration covers reviewing this guide.

Establish suitability privately

Check fear, coercion, retaliation, and the ability to decline before inviting joint practice. Follow the service's separate screening and safety procedures. Do not label abuse a mutual communication deficit. Seek specialist consultation or referral when joint work is unsuitable.

PK06-07 | continued

Choose a narrow learning task

Ask partners what they hope to gain and what they want to avoid. Select a low-stakes topic. Offer spoken or written turns, interpretation, processing time, and a visible stop option. Agree how to handle a pause without pursuing, blaming, or forcing reconnection.

Observe and respond

Notice whether both perspectives can influence the activity. Interrupt intimidation or pressure; better phrasing alone is not the remedy. Invite feedback about whether the task fit their language, culture, disability, and relationship structure. Close with a voluntary next step, or with a decision that no home practice is appropriate.

1. Suitability, adaptation, and follow-up questions to address through approved clinical processes**Facilitator notes and adaptation**

Use approved, confidential documentation systems for real client information. These educational pages do not establish safety, competence, consent, or treatment effectiveness.

PK06-07 | continued**About this resource**

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