The Connection Room

Listen. Pause. Repair. Make room for each other.

Connection grows through repeated respectful actions. These practices are for relationships where both people can speak freely and safely.

1

Pause with a plan

Notice a tight jaw, louder voice, or urge to insult. Say: This matters. I need a break. Can we check back at 7:30?

2

Describe. Feel. Request.

Choose one specific concern. When plans change late, I feel overwhelmed. Could we decide earlier and share the cleanup?

3

Listen before solving

Reflect: What I hear is ___. Did I get it? Ask one curious question before sharing your view. Understanding does not require agreement.

4

Repair your part

I raised my voice. That was hurtful. I am sorry. Next time I will pause sooner. Follow an apology with a specific change; avoid but you made me.

TRY IT IN REAL LIFE

One partner wants an early dinner; the other works late. Each names the need underneath the preference. Agree on two workable options, try one for a week, and choose a time to review.

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Your practice page / Write, speak, or reflect privately

Small acts, real care

Try a short check-in and ten phone-free minutes when children are safely supervised. Share the work of noticing, planning, and finishing household tasks. Ask which kind of care feels welcome; no one owes affection, sex, money, or service.

01 Our early warning cues / pause phrase

02 Our check-back time or safe alternative

03 One specific concern and clear request

04 One task each person will own

05 Our connection time / review date

One thing I learned / One adjustment I will try

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Keep-close cards / Support, sources, and a next step

PAUSE

Take a safe calming break. Check back or clearly reschedule.

REQUEST

When ___ happens, I feel ___. Could we ___?

LISTEN

What I hear is ___. Did I understand?

REPAIR

Take responsibility without blame. Name one change you will make.

CARE & SAFETY

Threats, coercion, humiliation, monitoring, blocked exits, and fear of retaliation require private professional support before joint exercises. Never follow or corner a partner taking space. Safety takes priority over a promised return time.

SOURCES & SCOPE

The Gottman Institute: gentle start-up, listening, repair, and calming breaks (gottman.com); VA National Center for PTSD: intimate partner violence (ptsd.va.gov).

Original educational guide. Not therapy, a diagnosis, a detox plan, or a substitute for individualized care. Adapt practice with a qualified clinician. Reviewed for this collection: November 2026.