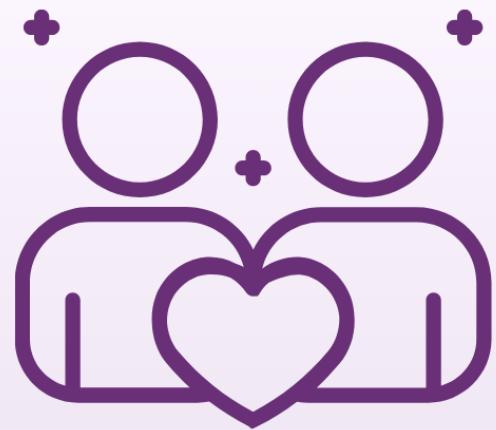


The State of the Union:

Your Weekly Couple's Check In



The State of the Union is a time to reflect on the relationship and share both things that are working well and things that need to be addressed. Issues build up over time and lead to either big fights or distance. Having a State of the Union conversation can help you stay connected and engaged in your relationship in an otherwise distracting world.

**The State of the Union has four parts to it.
They are as follows:**

Give one another 5 appreciations

In the first part of the meeting, take turns sharing five things your partner did in the past week that you appreciated. Note what the positive trait means about your partner. For example, *“I appreciate how considerate you were this past week when you picked up the clothes from the dry cleaners when I ran out of time.”*



Talk about what went right in the relationship

Next, take some time to discuss together what is working, improving, or going well in the relationship. For example, perhaps your family faced difficult stress this past week and you both worked well as a team in navigating it. Or maybe you were both good at scheduling date night and following through. This would be the place to say so.

Acknowledging the work you and your partner put into the relationship will help you stay motivated to continue.



Select an issue to talk about or process any regrettable incidents

At this point, take turns sharing any concerns you may have from the past week. Conflict is inevitable and necessary in any relationship. When handled constructively, it will leave you feeling more connected. For that to happen, you must work on attuning to one another.



To help you stay attuned to one another, Dr. John Gottman has developed an acronym to easily remember what to do during these conversations:

A.T.T.U.N.E.



- **Awareness** – of your partners feeling and experience
- **Tolerance** – that there are two different valid viewpoints for negative emotions
- **Turning Toward** – recognizing your partner's need and turning toward it
- **Understanding** – attempting to understand your partners' experience and their perspective
- **Non-defensive Listening** – listening to your partner's perspective without concentrating on victimizing yourself or reversing the blame
- **Empathy** – responding to your partner with an understanding, awareness, and sensitivity to their experience and needs

To attune to one another, you should take turns being Speaker and Listener. When it is your turn to share, it is your job as Speaker to express your feelings and needs without blaming or criticizing your partner. To do this effectively, you can follow the rules for a softened start-up.

- ***I feel...*** (share what emotions you have such as worried, scared, sad, lonely, hurt, etc.)
- ***...about what...*** (share the situation you are concerned about, not what's wrong with your partner)
- ***I need...*** (express what you need in positive terms, i.e., what you need to happen versus what you don't like that is currently happening)

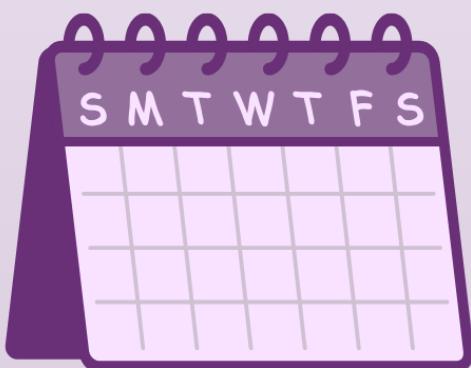
This can look like: ***"I am feeling tired and overwhelmed from cooking the past seven nights. I need us to come up with a plan for this coming week where we share the cooking or eat out more."***



When you are the Listener, it is your job to listen non-defensively and help your partner feel heard and understood.

Discuss what would make each of you feel more loved

Lastly, you end your State of the Union discussion by each sharing one thing your partner can do to help you feel connected in the coming week. Share what you want to see happen. For example, you may share, *“One thing that would help me feel more loved in the coming week is if we spent some time cuddling in bed on Saturday morning.”*



Check in weekly

When couples make the time on a weekly basis to check in with one another, it helps you both feel heard, understood, and appreciated in the relationship. It prevents issues from building up and gives you space and time to practice solving problems together.

If you're seeking more guidance in your relationship, email me at
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