

Communication Matters



Communication Playbook

Scripts for When It Matters Most



Communication Matters

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Before You Begin

The words you choose in a triggered moment are either going to open a door or slam it shut.

This workbook isn't about manipulating your partner or saying whatever it takes to keep the peace. It's about communicating in a way that actually lands — that reaches the person underneath the defense, the shutdown, the explosion, or the spiral.

Here's what you need to know first:

- Communication is always happening — through your words, your silence, your tone, your body language, and your nervous system. The scripts in this workbook only work if the energy behind them is genuine.
- Your partner's attachment pattern isn't an excuse for harmful behavior. These scripts help you navigate their patterns — they don't ask you to tolerate disrespect.
- Knowing what to say is the last step. Regulating yourself first is the foundation. If you are fully triggered, wait until you can breathe before you speak.
- One script won't fix years of patterns. Consistency will. Use these tools repeatedly and watch what shifts over time.
- Words are only part of communication. Each scenario in this workbook includes not just what to say, but what to do — because your actions communicate just as loudly as your words.

This toolkit covers three insecure attachment patterns:

- **Dismissive Avoidant Attachment**— the partner who goes quiet, shuts down, and pulls away
- **Anxious Preoccupied Attachment**— the partner who spirals, needs reassurance, and fears abandonment
- **Disorganized Attachment (also known as Fearful Avoidant)**— the partner who both craves and fears closeness, often swinging between the two

Because Communication Matters more than you know.

Dismissive Avoidant Attachment



The partner who goes quiet, withdraws, and shuts the door

CORE WOUND

"I am defective. Closeness is dangerous."

Your partner — someone who leans dismissively avoidant — learned early on that emotions weren't safe to express, so they stopped expressing them. They don't pull away because they don't care. They pull away because their nervous system tells them that closeness equals pain. They are deeply sensitive to anything that sounds like criticism, pressure, or emotional demand. The key to reaching them isn't more intensity — it's less. Calm, non-critical, low-pressure communication is the only language that gets through the wall.

Scripts by Trigger Moment

When they shut down and go silent

✘ AVOID SAYING:

Why won't you just talk to me? You always do this. This is so frustrating.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

I can see you need some space right now. I'll give you that. I'd love for us to pick this back up tonight — say around 7pm in the living room. Does that work for you?

🧑 THEN DO THIS:

Wait calmly for their response. If they agree, honor the time and show up. If they say no, ask them: 'When would be a good time for you?' If they don't offer a time, let them know: 'I'll be in the living room at 7 when you're ready.' Then walk away without chasing.

⚠️ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If they don't show up at the agreed time, do not go looking for them or re-escalate. Their absence is communication — it is telling you they don't have the capacity to handle this in the way it needs to be handled. That is a different conversation for a different time, and one worth having with clarity and calm when you're both ready.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Pressure accelerates withdrawal. Naming a specific time and place removes ambiguity and gives them something concrete to work with. Following through on your end — and noticing whether they follow through on theirs — tells you a great deal about what you're working with.

When they deflect or change the subject mid-conversation

✗ AVOID SAYING:

Why do you always avoid the real issue? We never actually finish anything.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

That's worth talking about — just not right now. Right now I'd love for us to finish what we started first.

🚶 THEN DO THIS:

Hold your position physically — don't shift your posture or energy to follow the new topic. Stay calm and grounded. If they continue deflecting, gently repeat the redirect once more, then give them a moment of quiet before continuing.

⚠️ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If they consistently refuse to return to the original topic, that pattern of avoidance is itself the issue. Make a note of it. A partner who will not stay with one conversation long enough to resolve it is communicating something about their capacity — and that is a deeper conversation worth having intentionally.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Partners who are avoidantly attached deflect when they feel overwhelmed. Redirecting without blame keeps the focus without creating shame.

When they act like nothing happened after a conflict

✗ AVOID SAYING:

Are you serious right now? We can't just pretend that didn't happen.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

I'm not quite ready to move past this yet. I still need us to finish what we started. Can we do that?

🚶 THEN DO THIS:

Stay warm but don't match their lightness yet. Let your body language reflect that you're still present with the unresolved thing — not cold, not punishing, just not done. If they are willing to re-engage, meet them with openness.

⚠️ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If they repeatedly use pseudo-repair to avoid resolution — acting as though conflict never happened — that is a pattern worth naming in a separate, calm conversation. Over time, unresolved things compound. You deserve closure, not just calm.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Pseudo-repair is a common avoidant move. Holding your ground calmly communicates your needs without an attack.

When the conversation escalates and they start attacking instead of solving

✗ AVOID SAYING:

You're being so cruel right now. I can't believe you're saying this.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

I want to talk about this — and I can only do that if we're not attacking each other. I want to come back to this when we can focus on solving it together.

🚶 THEN DO THIS:

Exit the room calmly and without slamming doors, sighing loudly, or making it theatrical. Go somewhere you can regulate — not to punish, but to protect the conversation. Return when you are genuinely calm.

⚠️ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If escalation becomes a consistent pattern used to end conversations, name it directly in a separate moment of calm: 'I've noticed that when things get hard, it tends to get heated in a way that shuts things down. I want to find a way through that with you.' If it continues without acknowledgment or effort, that is a deeper issue.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Escalation is often a sign of overwhelm. Stepping away without storming off models emotional regulation and preserves the relationship.

When you need to raise a concern or ask for something

❌ AVOID SAYING:

You never make time for me. I always feel like I'm last on your list.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

I feel really connected to you when we have time together. I'd love to figure out how we can create more of that — would you be open to brainstorming that with me?

🚶 THEN DO THIS:

Bring this up at a neutral, calm moment — not in the middle of conflict or when either of you is depleted. Keep your tone curious, not heavy. Make it a conversation, not a presentation.

⚠️ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

Pay close attention to whether they agree but then don't follow through. A partner who consistently says yes but doesn't act on it is communicating something important. That pattern — agreeing without follow-through — is its own conversation, and one you will need to have with honesty and care.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Someone with dismissive avoidant attachment hears criticism as confirmation they are defective. Framing needs as invitations removes the threat and creates space for cooperation.

When they keep circling back to the same complaint without resolution

❌ AVOID SAYING:

You keep bringing this up but you never actually want to solve it.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

I hear you — and I want to understand. Can we stay with just this one thing until we work it out, and then move on from there?

🚶 THEN DO THIS:

Slow the pace of the conversation down. Ask a clarifying question rather than jumping to a solution. Let them feel heard before you move toward resolution.

⚠️ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If this pattern repeats without progress, it may be worth exploring whether there is a need underneath the complaint that has never actually been named — or whether professional support might help you both find a way through.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Containment creates safety. One issue at a time prevents overwhelm and actually moves things forward.

Anxious Preoccupied Attachment



The partner who needs reassurance, reads into everything, and fears being left

CORE WOUND

"I am not enough. I will be abandoned."

Your partner — someone who has an anxiously preoccupied attachment — isn't trying to be exhausting. Their nervous system genuinely cannot settle without external reassurance. They think about the relationship constantly. They pick up on every shift in your tone, every late reply, every distracted moment. Their core wound is that they are not enough and that love will always eventually leave. The most powerful thing you can do is speak directly to those wounds — not by walking on eggshells, but by being consistent, clear, and emotionally present.

Scripts by Trigger Moment

When they are spiraling or seeking reassurance repeatedly

✗ AVOID SAYING:

I already told you this. Why do you keep asking me the same thing?

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

I want to make sure you hear this — I am really happy with you and with what we have. That hasn't changed. I'm not going anywhere.

🧑 THEN DO THIS:

Make physical contact if it's welcomed — a hand on their arm, a hug, sitting close. Regulation happens through the body as much as through words. Let your presence be part of the reassurance.

⚠️ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If reassurance-seeking becomes so frequent that it is unsustainable for you, that is worth naming gently in a calm moment. It is also a sign that your partner may benefit from additional support beyond what you alone can provide.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

A partner with anxious preoccupied attachment doesn't ask the same question because they didn't hear the answer. They ask because their nervous system hasn't calmed down yet. Repetition delivered with patience is regulation.

When they interpret your distance as rejection

✗ AVOID SAYING:

Not everything is about you. I'm just tired.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

Hey — I just want you to know that everything is fine between us. I'm feeling a little drained today, and it has nothing to do with you or how I feel about you.

🧑 THEN DO THIS:

Offer a small but genuine gesture of connection — a text, a touch, checking in before you go quiet. You don't have to perform emotional availability you don't have. But a small bridge goes a long way.

⚠️ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If you find yourself constantly having to explain your emotional unavailability, it may be worth exploring whether there are ways to increase your presence — or whether the gap between what you have to offer and what they need is worth an honest conversation.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Someone with anxious attachment fills silence with their worst fears. A brief, unprompted reassurance short-circuits the spiral before it starts.

When you genuinely need space without them taking it personally

✗ AVOID SAYING:

I just need you to leave me alone right now.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:


I love spending time with you, and tonight I need a few hours to myself to reset — not because anything is wrong between us, but because I need to recharge. I'm looking forward to seeing you on [day/time].

 **THEN DO THIS:**

Follow through on the time you named. Don't extend it without communicating. Send a brief check-in during the space if that feels natural — not because you have to, but because it bridges the gap for them while you take what you need.


 **IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:**

If taking space consistently results in a spiral regardless of how you communicate it, that is a signal that your partner may need additional tools or support to self-regulate. That is a loving conversation worth having.

 **WHY IT WORKS:**

Asking for space without context feels like abandonment to a partner with anxious attachment. Context and a return date are everything.

When they are upset and need to feel heard first

 **AVOID SAYING:**

You're overreacting. This isn't a big deal.

 **SAY THIS INSTEAD:**

I hear that you're really hurting right now. That matters to me. Tell me more about what you're feeling.

 **THEN DO THIS:**

Put your phone down. Turn toward them. Let your body communicate that you are fully present. Don't start problem-solving until they signal they feel understood — ask: 'Do you want me to just listen or would it help to think through it together?'

 **IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:**

If you consistently skip this step and move straight to solutions, expect the conversation to cycle back. The feeling has to be heard before the problem can be solved. There are no shortcuts here.

 **WHY IT WORKS:**

A partner with anxious attachment cannot receive logic or solutions until they feel emotionally met. Validation is the door — everything else comes after.

When you want to proactively reduce their anxiety in the relationship

 **AVOID SAYING:**

[Nothing — silence and hoping they figure out they're loved]

 **SAY THIS INSTEAD:**

I was just thinking about you and I wanted you to know. I really appreciate the way you [name something specific they did recently].

 **THEN DO THIS:**

Make this a habit, not a reaction. Reach out before they spiral, not after. Specificity matters — generic affirmations land lighter than a concrete observation about something real they did.


 **IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:**

If proactive reassurance is one-directional for a long time — meaning you always initiate and they rarely reciprocate — that imbalance is worth addressing. Healthy relationships require both partners to show up.

 **WHY IT WORKS:**

Someone with anxious preoccupied attachment thinks about you constantly and wonders if you think about them too. Reaching out first — especially with specifics — is one of the most stabilizing things you can do.

When they become clingy or reactive during conflict

 **AVOID SAYING:**

This is exactly why I need space from you. You make everything so intense.

 **SAY THIS INSTEAD:**

I can see this conversation is really activating for you right now. I want us to find our way through it. Can we slow down and take it one piece at a time?

 **THEN DO THIS:**

Lower your own voice and pace intentionally. Your regulation will begin to influence theirs. Suggest a five-minute pause if things are escalating — not to end the conversation, but to reset it.

 **IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:**

If reactivity during conflict is a consistent pattern that makes resolution impossible, that is worth addressing directly and compassionately outside of the conflict itself.

 **WHY IT WORKS:**

Labeling someone with anxious attachment as intense or too much confirms their deepest fear. Slowing the pace and staying present communicates that you can handle their emotions — which is exactly what they need to see.

Disorganized Attachment



Also known as *Fearful Avoidant* — the partner who craves and fears closeness at the same time

CORE WOUND

"I want love, but love is where I get hurt."

Your partner — someone who has a disorganized attachment pattern, also referred to as fearful avoidant — carries one of the most complex wounds in relationship psychology. They didn't have a reliable blueprint for safe love in childhood. The person who was supposed to comfort them was also the source of their fear. As a result, they can swing between seeking connection and withdrawing from it, sometimes within the same conversation. They may come toward you and then punish you for letting them. They may need you desperately and then tell you to leave. Patience, consistency, and clear boundaries are the three things that matter most here.

Scripts by Trigger Moment

When they swing between closeness and resistance in the same conversation

✗ AVOID SAYING:

I can't keep up with you. I don't know what you want.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

I know this feels really conflicted right now, and that makes sense. I'm not going anywhere — I'm just going to stay right here with you.

🧘 THEN DO THIS:

Keep your body language open and still. Don't mirror their fluctuation by moving toward and away from them. Be the anchor — consistent, calm, present — while they find their footing.

⚠ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If this pattern is constant and you find yourself exhausted by the unpredictability, that is important information. It does not mean the relationship is unsalvageable, but it does mean that both of you likely need more support than scripts alone can provide.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Naming the conflict with compassion — without making it their fault — is stabilizing. It signals that you can handle their complexity without running.

When they distance themselves but clearly don't want you to leave

✗ AVOID SAYING:

Fine. I'll go since that's what you want.

🗨 SAY THIS INSTEAD:

I hear you saying you need space, and I'll respect that. I also want you to know I'm not going far. I'll be here when you're ready.

🚶 THEN DO THIS:

Stay in the home or nearby space without hovering. Do something quiet and self-contained. Check back in after a reasonable window — around 30 minutes — with something low-pressure like a cup of tea or a simple 'I'm here if you want to talk.'

⚠ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If they consistently create distance and never return to connection, that cycle needs to be named. Being available is not the same as being indefinitely on hold.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Leaving abruptly confirms their deepest belief — that love abandons. Staying nearby without being intrusive is the rare middle ground that builds actual safety.

When they become emotionally dysregulated or explosive

✗ AVOID SAYING:

You're out of control right now. I can't talk to you when you're like this.

🗨 SAY THIS INSTEAD:

I can see this is really overwhelming for you. I care about working through this with you, and I need us to slow down first. I'm not going anywhere — let's come back to this in [20 minutes / when both of us are calm — agree on this together before you separate].

🚶 THEN DO THIS:

Leave the space calmly. Do not escalate on your way out. Go somewhere you can genuinely regulate — walk, breathe, write. Return at the time you named. If they are not ready at that time, name a new specific time together.

⚠ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If explosive dysregulation happens frequently and does not improve, professional support — individually or together — is not optional. You cannot regulate someone else's nervous system for them indefinitely.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Someone with a disorganized attachment pattern often experienced chaos as connection. Calm, steady presence without abandonment is genuinely new territory that rewires over time.

When they test you by picking fights or manufacturing conflict

✗ AVOID SAYING:

Here we go again. You're always starting something.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

Something feels off right now, and I don't want to fight about it — I want to understand it. What's actually going on for you?

🧑 THEN DO THIS:

Stay genuinely curious rather than defensive. Ask one open question and then listen — really listen — before you respond. Resist the pull to match their energy or defend yourself against what hasn't actually been said yet.

⚠️ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If manufactured conflict becomes the primary mode of connection in the relationship, that pattern needs to be named directly and compassionately when things are calm. It is not sustainable, and naming it is an act of care — for both of you.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

Conflict can feel like the safest form of contact for someone with a disorganized attachment pattern. Going beneath the surface and staying curious often reveals what is really being asked for.

When they become disrespectful and cross a clear line

✗ AVOID SAYING:

You are so messed up. I don't know why I'm even with you.

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:

I love you, and I'm not going to stay in this conversation while it feels like this. I'm going to give us both some time. I'll be back in the living room at [specific time] — let's come back to this when we can talk to each other with respect.

🧑 THEN DO THIS:

Leave without performing your exit. No slamming, no sighing, no parting words designed to land. Go. Regulate. Return at the time you named. If they are not ready, say: 'I still want to work this out. When you're ready to do that respectfully, I'm here.'

⚠️ IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:

If disrespect is frequent and does not come with genuine repair and change, that is a boundary issue that requires a serious conversation — and possibly outside support. Holding the line with love is not the same as tolerating repeated harm.

🧠 WHY IT WORKS:

A partner with disorganized attachment expects their behavior to end relationships. Holding a boundary with love — not punishment — is transformative. It shows them that limits and love can coexist.

When you want to create more safety and predictability over time

✗ AVOID SAYING:

[Waiting for things to feel stable before you try to connect]

🗨️ SAY THIS INSTEAD:


I want you to know that I'm consistent — I'll be the same person today that I am tomorrow. I'm not going anywhere, and I'm not going to change how I feel about you based on a hard moment.

 **THEN DO THIS:**

Say this and then prove it — repeatedly, over time, with your actions. Show up the same way after a conflict as you do on a good day. Your consistency is the most stabilizing force in a relationship with someone who has this pattern.

 **IF THEY REFUSE OR DON'T FOLLOW THROUGH:**

If you are the only one working toward stability and safety, that imbalance will wear on you. Consistency is a gift you give — but it needs to be received and reciprocated over time, even imperfectly. Monitor how this effort lands and be honest with yourself about what you are experiencing.

 **WHY IT WORKS:**

Predictability is the antidote to a nervous system shaped by disorganized attachment. Saying this once won't change everything — but saying it and meaning it repeatedly will.

A Final Word

The scripts in this workbook aren't magic — they're a starting point.

Real change in a relationship happens when both people are willing to grow — and sometimes, your willingness to show up differently is what creates the opening for them to do the same. You cannot control your partner's attachment patterns. You can only control how clearly and honestly you communicate, how consistently you show up, and how well you care for your own nervous system in the process.

Remember: communication is always happening. In your words, in your silence, in your body, and in the space between you. The most powerful thing you can do is become intentional about all of it.

You deserve a relationship where you feel heard, respected, and genuinely connected. This workbook is one piece of that journey.

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