

# Conflict & Communication Starter Pack

## Why Pausing Helps

In heated moments, your nervous system often moves into fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. Taking a brief, intentional pause is not "giving up"—it is creating space to respond with more clarity instead of reacting from survival mode.

## Pause Phrases (To Slow Down Heated Moments)

Use these phrases to press a gentle pause without shutting the other person down:

- "I want to keep talking about this, and I can feel myself getting flooded. Can we take a short break and come back in 20 minutes?"
- "This matters to me, and I want to respond thoughtfully, not react. I need a moment to collect myself."
- "I am noticing my chest getting tight and my voice getting louder. I am going to take a quick pause so I do not say something I regret."
- "I am still here and I care. I just need a minute to slow my system down."
- "Can we both take a few breaths before we continue? I want to hear you clearly."

## Clarifying Questions (To Reduce Assumptions)

Instead of assuming what the other person means, try one of these questions:

- "When you say \_\_\_\_\_, what does that mean to you?"
- "What part of this feels most important to you right now?"
- "What were you hoping would happen instead?"
- "What do you most need from me in this conversation—understanding, problem-solving, or something else?"
- "Is there anything I am saying or doing that is making this feel worse for you?"
- "Can I repeat back what I heard to see if I am getting it?"

These questions invite more clarity and help both people move away from mind-reading and toward understanding.

## Reflection Worksheet: What Was My Goal in This Conflict?

You can use these prompts after a conflict—or to prepare for a hard conversation. Write your answers in a journal or on a separate page.

### 1. Before or after the conflict

- What was I hoping would happen in this conversation?

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- What did I most want the other person to understand?

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### 2. What actually happened for me

- When did I start to feel myself getting activated (1–10)? What number was I at?

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- What were the main feelings I noticed (for example: hurt, fear, shame, anger)?

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- Did I move into fight, flight, freeze, or fawn? What did that look like for me?

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### 3. Checking my goal

- Was my behavior aligned with my deeper goal (for example: to be honest, to stay connected, to be respectful)? Why or why not?

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### 4. Next time

- One thing I would like to try differently next time is:

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- One phrase or pause I can use to support that change is:

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