

# The Weekly Check In

Allows couples to address the big issues in their relationship in a controlled and emotionally neutral environment.

## Rules

Revisit the rules at the beginning of each meeting to keep them fresh in your mind.

1. Message, delivery, and interpretation
  - a. The message is what we want them to know
  - b. The delivery is how you tell them
  - c. The interpretation is how they receive it
2. Remember the 4 Horsemen
  - a. Criticism – attacking the person (*You always... You never... All you ever think about...*)
  - b. Defensiveness – defending the attack (*If you hadn't done... Then I wouldn't have... The only reason I did that is because... I didn't mean it like that...*)
  - c. Contempt – mocking, sarcasm, eye rolls, name calling, dismissive comments *Ugh... Whatever*
  - d. Stonewalling – checking out physically (storming out of the room) or mentally (smiling and nodding)
3. Active listening – your partner won't always get the delivery right, so be patient with them and notice the effort. Listen for the message: What is your partner trying to tell you?
4. The Magic Ratio
  - a. 5:1 – 5 pleasant interactions for every 1 unpleasant interaction
5. Look for the Win/Win – just because your opinion is valid doesn't mean that your partners isn't.

## The Chat

Set aside the same time each week for your check in. This creates consistency and helps to rebuild a new habit. It also means that you can put it in your diary so that it remains a priority.

1. Set the scene – tea, coffee, brunch, etc. (NO ALCOHOL!)
2. Revisit the rules
3. Choose who will go first – you can alternate from week-to-week or keep it consistent.
4. The roles you play
  - a. The Speaker – Focus on your delivery; how are you communicating your message? *I feel... I need...* If your partner is struggling to understand or misunderstands remain calm and try again. Remember they are trying their best and that this is a skill that will take time to master.
  - b. The Listener – Suspend your agenda (your turn will come). This is not about defending your actions it is about trying to understand how your partner is feeling. You don't have to agree in order to understand. *It sounds like you feel... when I... Is that right?*
5. Be mindful of how you are communicating and pull yourself up if you find yourself engaging in one of the horsemen. Try not to pull your partner up on it (we are looking for increased accountability and ownership of our own actions), however in cases where it feels like it's snowballing it may be helpful to flag your concerns or request a time out.
6. If there are topics that you are having difficulties resolving write them down and bring them to your next session.
7. Finally, take some time to appreciate the things that went well over the week – While it is important to address that areas that require improvement, it is equally important to acknowledge the effort and successes. Remember that it may be a subtle improvement, but steps in the right direction are more likely to continue when they are noticed.