

# Relationship Communication — Workbook

This workbook is your hands-on companion to the Relationship Communication course. Each section corresponds to a course module and provides exercises, worksheets, and checklists to turn frameworks into lived practice. Work through the sections in order, ideally within 48 hours of completing each module, while the concepts are fresh.

## The Communication Blueprint — Observation, Feeling, Need, Request

Practise converting your real-life complaints into four-step NVC statements and build your personal feelings and needs vocabulary.

### Exercise: Jackal-to-Giraffe Translation

Choose three real complaints or criticisms you have said (or thought) about your partner or a close person in the last week. Rewrite each one as a complete four-step NVC statement: observation, feeling, need, request. Focus on one specific incident per statement — not a pattern.

- What is the camera-lens observation (what would a video camera record — no interpretation)?  
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- What feeling does this observation trigger in you? Use a specific word from the NVC feelings inventory, not a faux feeling.  
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- What universal human need is that feeling pointing to? (Use the nine Max-Neef categories as a guide.)  
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- What specific, positive, present-tense, do-able request would address this need right now?  
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### Worksheet: My Personal Feelings and Needs Inventory

Working from memory — without looking at a list — write every feeling word you can name in 5 minutes. Then do the same for needs. Count both lists. Review the NVC feelings and needs inventories and circle any words that resonate strongly with your current life. Add the top five feelings and top five needs to the table below for quick reference during difficult conversations.

Feeling words I use most often

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Faux feelings I say that are actually thoughts (e.g., 'I feel unheard')

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My top 5 genuine feeling words to remember

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My top 5 unmet needs right now

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The need I find hardest to ask for — and why

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## Checklist: NVC Foundation — Daily Practice Checklist (Week 1)

- Once per day, pause and name two specific feelings and the needs behind them (even privately in your head)
- Catch at least one Jackal statement before or after it comes out of your mouth each day
- Rewrite one real complaint per day into a four-step NVC statement in your journal
- Notice and name one 'faux feeling' you use habitually this week
- Practise the NVC formula once in a low-stakes real conversation (not a heated one)

## Active Listening — How to Hear What Is Really Being Said

Develop your reflective listening, validation, and curious questioning skills through structured practice exercises.

### Exercise: The Three-Level Listening Audit

Recall a recent conversation — ideally a slightly difficult one — and replay it honestly from memory. Analyse your listening quality level by level using the questions below. Then repeat the exercise for a conversation you would like to handle differently next time.

- What percentage of the conversation were you at Level 1 (downloading — forming responses, confirming existing beliefs)?

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- Were there moments of Level 3 (empathic) listening? What enabled them or what collapsed them?

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- What was your inner voice saying while the other person was speaking? Write it out honestly.

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- What do you think the other person needed most in that conversation — and did they get it from you?

### Worksheet: Reflection, Validation, and Curiosity Script Builder

For a real ongoing situation in your relationship that creates tension, write out one example of each of the three micro-skills as if you were using them in a real conversation. Write in first-person, as you would actually say it — not as a textbook example.

Brief description of the situation (1-2 sentences)

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A reflective statement that captures the content of what they are saying

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A reflective statement that captures the feeling underneath their words

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A validation statement ('It makes sense that you... because...')

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Two genuinely curious questions you could ask to deepen understanding (not to defend yourself)

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What you would need to do internally to stay at Level 3 in this situation

### Checklist: Active Listening — Practice Milestones

- In one conversation this week, listen for a full 90 seconds without saying anything other than brief acknowledgements
- Use at least one genuine validation statement ('It makes sense that you feel...') this week
- Try a curious question beginning with 'What was that like for you?' in a real conversation
- Notice and interrupt yourself the next time you finish someone else's sentence
- Practise the 20-second breathing protocol before a conversation you know will be difficult
- After a conflict, write down: what were the two realities in play? What did each person need?

## Exercise: The Two-Truths Mapping Exercise

Pick one recurring disagreement in your most important relationship. Map both experiences side by side without evaluating who is right. The goal is to hold both realities simultaneously.

- Describe the situation from your point of view — what happened, what you felt, what you needed

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- Describe the same situation as you believe your partner experiences it — what they felt, what they needed

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- What legitimate need is driving your preferred strategy?

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- What legitimate need might be driving their preferred strategy — and how compatible are the two needs really?

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## Making Requests and Repairing Ruptures

Convert your complaints into effective requests, build a personalised repair vocabulary, and identify your Four Horsemen patterns and their antidotes.

### Worksheet: Complaint-to-Request Conversion Sheet

List your three most common complaints in your primary relationship. For each one, write the underlying feeling, the underlying need, and then a request that meets the four criteria (specific, positive, present-tense, do-able). Test the request against the 'check-box test' — could this literally be ticked off a to-do list?

Complaint 1 — original phrasing

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Complaint 1 — underlying feeling

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Complaint 1 — underlying need

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Complaint 1 — converted request (specific / positive / present-tense / do-able)

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Complaint 2 — original phrasing

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Complaint 2 — underlying feeling

---

Complaint 2 — underlying need

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Complaint 2 — converted request

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Complaint 3 — original phrasing

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Complaint 3 — underlying feeling

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Complaint 3 — underlying need

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Complaint 3 — converted request

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## Exercise: Build Your Personal Repair Vocabulary

In a calm moment (not during conflict), create your own list of repair attempts that feel authentic to you. Review the 24-phrase toolkit from the lesson, keep any that feel natural, modify others to match your voice, and add original ones. Then share the list with your partner and build a joint agreed list together.

- Which phrases from the lesson toolkit feel genuinely natural to you — not scripted?

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  - Write 3 repair attempts in your own words that signal 'I don't want us to spiral'

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  - What is one non-verbal repair attempt (gesture, touch, expression) that your partner would recognise?

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  - What repair attempt would you most want to receive when you are flooded — and have you told your partner?
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## Checklist: Four Horsemen Self-Audit

- Identified which of the Four Horsemen I use most frequently (criticism / contempt / defensiveness / stonewalling)
- Practised converting one critical statement into a gentle start-up 'I feel / I need' statement
- Named three specific things I genuinely appreciate about my partner this week (contempt antidote)
- Accepted responsibility for at least one small part of a recent disagreement without immediately counter-attacking (defensiveness antidote)
- Called or accepted a 20-minute time-out in a moment of flooding rather than stonewalling or pushing through
- Reviewed the repair vocabulary list with my partner in a calm moment

## Sustaining Connection — Intimacy Rituals, Difficult Conversations, and Daily Practice

Design your connection rituals, practise the difficult-conversation protocol on a real issue, and build your personalised 90-day practice plan.

### Worksheet: My Connection Ritual Design Sheet

Choose one connection ritual from the six described in the lesson to implement this week. Design its specifics below so it is concrete enough to actually happen. Then, once the first ritual is stable (approximately 3 weeks), choose a second.

Ritual I am starting (name it)

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Exact time and trigger (when, where, initiated by whom)

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What it looks and sounds like specifically (what we say, what we do)

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What would derail it — and my plan for those obstacles

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How I will know it is becoming a genuine habit (what will be different in 3 weeks)

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Second ritual I plan to add (note for later)

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## Exercise: Difficult Conversation Preparation — The Pre-Write

Choose one real issue you have been avoiding or mishandling with someone close to you. Use the seven-step protocol to prepare the conversation before you have it. Write out every step. Do not have the conversation until this preparation is complete.

- Write out your full NVC statement: observation / feeling / need / request — one specific incident only

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- Write the opening two sentences you will say to invite the conversation (gentle start-up, no blame)

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- What do you predict they will feel or say in response — and what is your plan to listen without defending?

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- What is the shared goal you can name that frames this as collaboration, not competition?

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## Checklist: My 90-Day Practice Commitment

- Days 1–30: complete a daily 3-minute feelings-and-needs journal entry each morning
- Days 1–30: use one NVC reflection statement per day in any conversation
- Days 31–60: initiate one gentle start-up conversation per week on a real recurring issue
- Days 31–60: practise the 20-minute flood time-out at least once if flooding occurs
- Days 61–90: conduct a weekly State of the Union meeting (45 min, appreciations first)
- Days 61–90: track the 5:1 positivity ratio consciously — log positive and negative interactions for one week
- All 90 days: keep the repair vocabulary list accessible and add to it as new phrases emerge
- Schedule a 90-day review conversation with partner to reflect on changes observed

## Your Action Plan

1. This week: write out your three most common complaints as full four-step NVC statements before attempting any difficult conversations
2. This week: build your personal feelings vocabulary by spending 5 minutes listing feeling words from memory, then review the NVC inventory and add 10 new words
3. Within 3 days: choose one connection ritual, schedule it specifically (day/time/who initiates), and begin it — the daily reunion conversation is the recommended starting point
4. Within 1 week: practise Level 3 listening in one conversation by listening for 90 uninterrupted seconds and then reflecting back the feeling, not just the content
5. Within 1 week: build your personal repair vocabulary list in a calm moment and share it with your partner
6. Within 2 weeks: use the difficult-conversation pre-write protocol to prepare and then initiate one conversation you have been avoiding
7. Within 2 weeks: identify which of the Four Horsemen you use most frequently and practise its antidote in one real interaction
8. Ongoing daily (90 days): write a 3-minute feelings-and-needs journal entry — name two feelings, identify the needs behind them
9. Weekly: conduct the five-appreciations exercise — name five specific things you value about your partner aloud
10. Monthly: review your repair vocabulary and connection rituals; assess what is working; adjust what is not; schedule the next month's deliberate practice focus









