Relationships & Communication

Understanding patterns and building healthier connections

Why communication can feel difficult

Relationships are shaped by needs, expectations, previous experiences, stress and different communication styles. Misunderstandings do not always mean that someone is uncaring or that a relationship is failing.

The connection cycle

An event happens, we interpret it, experience an emotion and respond. Our response influences what happens next. Pausing to separate what was said from what we assumed can help us choose a clearer response.

Helpful foundations

Respect, consent, curiosity, boundaries and repair matter. Healthy communication includes listening, explaining your own needs and making room for differences. You can ask for time to process or use written communication.

A useful sentence structure

When [specific situation] happens, I feel [emotion] because [need or concern]. Could we [clear, realistic request]? The other person may still have a different perspective.

Safety comes first

These tools are for relationships where it is safe to communicate. If you feel frightened, controlled or threatened, prioritise safety and seek appropriate support rather than attempting a difficult conversation alone.

Worksheet 1: My Patterns

Notice what happens before, during and after difficult moments

A recent interaction

Describe what happened using observable facts rather than guesses.

What I thought and felt

What meaning did I give the situation? Which emotions appeared?

How I responded

Did I withdraw, explain, argue, agree quickly or ask for space?

What I needed

Think about reassurance, clarity, respect, time, privacy or support.

Worksheet 2: Clear Requests

Practise expressing a need without blame

What I would like to communicate

Choose one topic rather than trying to solve everything at once.

My feelings and needs

Use specific words and focus on your experience.

A clear, realistic request

What action could the other person understand and respond to?

A communication adjustment that helps me

Examples: written notes, pauses, advance notice or extra processing time.

Worksheet 3: Listening & Repair

Make space for understanding and rebuilding trust

What might the other person be experiencing?

List possibilities without assuming you know their thoughts.

What would I like to understand better?

Write a respectful question you could ask.

If something went wrong, what could repair look like?

An apology, clarification, changed behaviour or agreed next step.

What boundary must still be respected?

Repair does not require ignoring harm or abandoning your needs.

My Communication Plan

Choose one small step that supports connection

One relationship or situation I want to focus on

Choose something manageable and safe to explore.

One helpful phrase I can use

For example: I want to understand; can we talk when we both have time?

What I will do if I feel overwhelmed

Identify a pause, grounding action or supportive person.

My next step and when I will review it

Keep the plan realistic; progress can include setting a boundary.

Reminder: You can be respectful and still disagree. Communication is shared work, not something one person must carry alone.