



# From Blow-Ups to Break Throughs

STOP FIGHTING,  
START CONNECTING

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## Communication Patterns That Sabotage Connection

### AND WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD

#### A Quick Reference Guide for Relationship Communication



#### WHY THESE PATTERNS MATTER

The way we communicate during conflict determines whether we grow closer or drift apart. Your patterns can either establish a deep sense of safety and understanding within difficult moments or increase the rift between you and your partner.

These 5 patterns can easily show up in any relationship, often without us realizing the damage they're causing.

Small shifts in your language can create profound changes in your connection.

#### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

- Keep it handy during conversations
- Practice one pattern at a time
- Notice you have been using one of these patterns? You can say “Let me try that again” and rephrase with one of the suggested alternatives



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## Communication Patterns That Sabotage Connection

### AND WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD

#### 1

#### Avoid Using:

#### ACCUSATORY "YOU" STATEMENTS & PHRASES THAT ASSIGN BLAME OR ATTACK THE CHARACTER OF YOUR PARTNER

#### Sounds Like:

- "You always make me feel unimportant"
- "You never listen to me"
- "You're so selfish"

#### Why It Sabotages Connection:

Blame activates defensiveness and shame. When someone feels attacked, they are less likely to be able to hear your actual needs or feelings.

#### Try this Instead:

- "I feel unimportant when plans change without discussing it with me"
- "I need to feel heard when I'm sharing something important"
- "I'm feeling disconnected and would love more quality time together"



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## Communication Patterns That Sabotage Connection

### AND WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD

# 2

#### Avoid Using:

**DEFENSIVE RESPONSES THAT IMMEDIATELY JUSTIFY YOUR ACTIONS OR COUNTERATTACK WHEN YOUR PARTNER SHARES A CONCERN**

#### Sounds Like:

- "That's not what I meant!"
- "But I was only trying to help!"
- "Well, you do the same thing!"

#### Why It Sabotages Connection:

Defending blocks understanding and draws attention away from the original rupture. Your partner feels unheard, and the real issue never gets addressed.

#### Try this Instead:

- "Help me understand what that felt like for you"
- "I can see this really affected you - are you open to sharing more?"
- "What would have felt better to you in that moment?"



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## Communication Patterns That Sabotage Connection

### AND WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD

# 3

#### Avoid Using:

**ABSOLUTE WORDS LIKE "ALWAYS," "NEVER," "EVERY TIME" THAT GENERALIZE BEHAVIOR OR BRING UP PAST ISSUES**

#### Sounds Like:

- "You always interrupt me"
- "You never appreciate what I do"
- "Every time we have this conversation..."

#### Why It Sabotages Connection:

Generalizations feel overwhelming and hopeless and aren't usually accurate. They make your partner feel like they can never get it right and discount any times that they may have done something slightly differently.

#### Try this Instead:

- "When you interrupted me just now, I felt like my thoughts didn't matter and this is a pattern that seems to happen frequently in our communication"
- "I feel unseen when I clean the kitchen and it goes unnoticed, like what happened today"
- "In this conversation, I'm feeling unheard"



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## Communication Patterns That Sabotage Connection

### AND WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD

# 4

#### Avoid Using:

**SILENT TREATMENTS, WALKING AWAY WITHOUT EXPLANATION, OR SHUTTING DOWN DURING IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS**

#### Sounds Like:

- [Silent treatment] or [Walks away]
- "Fine, whatever"
- "I'm done with this conversation"

#### Why It Sabotages Connection:

Shutting down feels like abandonment to your partner. It leaves issues unresolved and creates emotional distance and can send a message that you don't care about how your partner is feeling.

#### Try this Instead:

- "I'm feeling overwhelmed and need a 20-minute break to collect my thoughts"
- "I want to hear you, but I need a moment to calm down first so I don't say something reactive"
- "Can we pause this conversation? I'll come back in an hour when I can listen better"



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## Communication Patterns That Sabotage Connection

### AND WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD

#### Avoid Using:

**RUSHING TO FIX OR SOLVE PROBLEMS WHEN YOUR PARTNER IS SHARING EMOTIONS OR SEEKING TO BE HEARD**

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#### Sounds Like:

- "Here's what you should do..."
- "At least..." or "Look on the bright side..."
- "Why are you making such a big deal of this? We can just..."

#### Why It Sabotages Connection:

Rushing to solve problems skips over the emotional connection your partner is seeking. They feel unheard and emotionally dismissed. Sometimes emotions just need to be felt in connection with others and "feeling felt" creates closeness.

#### Try this Instead:

- "I can understand why you'd feel that way"
- "What would feel most supportive to you right now?"
- Would you like to think about solutions or do you just wish to share how you are feeling about this right now?



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