

A FREE PRACTICE FROM RIVERCALM

# Relationships

*For conversations that get to the heart of things.*

BEFORE YOU START

# Feeling understood comes first.

Many arguments aren't really about the dishes, the phone or the plans that changed. They're about a feeling underneath that nobody named: feeling ignored, unimportant, alone, or afraid of losing the other person.

When a feeling isn't acknowledged, it doesn't go away. It gets louder. We repeat ourselves, raise our voice or shut down, and the conversation stays on the surface while the real issue waits underneath.

Validating means saying: what you feel makes sense, given how you see it. It doesn't mean agreeing, giving in or admitting you were wrong. It means taking the feeling seriously before trying to solve anything.

This starts with yourself. When you can name and accept your own feelings, you can share them without blame, and you have more room to hear what your partner feels. Two people who feel understood can actually talk about what's going on.

So: three things to practice, and one week to try them in.

A SUGGESTION

Validate before you solve. Advice, explanations and corrections can wait until both of you feel heard. Often the problem looks different once you do.

THE PRACTICE

# Three things, in this order.

## 01 Validate and soothe yourself first

Before you speak, notice what you feel and name it in your mind: *"I feel hurt and a bit scared."* Then validate it: *"It makes sense that I feel this way."*

Then be soothing with yourself, the way you'd calm someone you love: a slow breath, a hand on your chest, *"I can handle this conversation."*

*What do you feel, and what would help you feel calmer?*

## 02 Take turns

Whoever brought up the topic starts with their feeling, without blame: *"When you were on your phone during dinner, I felt alone. I'd love some time with just us."* The other person listens and validates before answering. Then you switch.

*How could you share your feeling in one sentence, without blame?*

> WHEN IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE
>
> Sometimes the other person is too hurt to listen. Then validate them first, and share your side after. But if one of you always feels last in line, that matters too: say it, and set a boundary if needed.

## 03 Validate your partner's feeling

When your partner shares something, listen for the feeling before the facts. Reflect it back: *"So you felt left out when I made plans without you. That makes sense."*

You don't have to agree with everything to say that. Ask *"Did I get that right?"* or *"Is there more?"* Often the real issue only comes up once someone feels heard.

*What could you say next time to show your partner you understand?*

ONE WEEK

# Small and often beats big and once.

Fill in a row on the days something comes up. Skip the others. Blank rows are part of the design.

| DAY | WHAT I FELT | WHAT MY PARTNER FELT | WHAT I SAID TO SHOW I UNDERSTOOD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Monday | | | |
| Tuesday | | | |
| Wednesday | | | |
| Thursday | | | |
| Friday | | | |
| Saturday | | | |
| Sunday | | | |

# That's it.

Feeling understood doesn't solve every problem, but it makes real solutions possible. Many couples notice the conversation changes once both people feel heard.

If you only keep one step, keep the third one. Showing your partner you understand is often what gets you both to the bottom of things.

If you'd like, write to me at info@rivercalm.life and let me know how this worksheet worked for you.



*— San*

## What's next?

Give the practice one week before you decide whether it works. Small steps, repeated, are what change things.

And if you'd like to go further:

- For couples caught in the same loop: my workbook The Anxious–Avoidant Relationship: rivercalm.life/books-workbooks/#the-anxious-avoidant-relationship
- Couples therapy and coaching with me, in English, Spanish or German: rivercalm.life/#sessions

These pages are educational and can't replace therapy or medical care. This worksheet is meant for relationships where both people feel safe. If you feel afraid of your partner, please reach out for support. If you're struggling with strong or long-lasting symptoms, please reach out to a mental health professional.