



30 DAYS TO A

# CONNECTED

RELATIONSHIP

EMBODIED & EMBRACED PSYCHOTHERAPY, LLC

*Hi there! I'm Christie Morgan*

MA, LPCC, she/her/hers

I am so glad you are here. It takes courage to grow and heal, and I am here to support you in having a fulfilling and joy-filled relationship.

As a relational trauma therapist, I am passionate about empowering you to break free from all that keeps you from experiencing the connection and sense of belonging that you deserve.

I believe that our imperfections are gateways for connection. They create opportunities for the most beautiful aspects of ourselves and our relationships to emerge. As you journey with through these next 30 days, offer yourself grace. You are only human. Perfection is not a requirement for a fulfilling relationship.

There is not a single part of you—no matter how messy—that is too broken or “too far gone.” Whether you struggle with PTSD, depression, anxiety, a personality disorder, or relationship issues, you deserve to live a fully embodied, authentic, and connected life.

You are worthy of love just as you are.

# Week 1: Deepen Your Friendship

Investing in your friendship with your partner is one of the best things you can do for your relationship. Deeply connected couples are intimately familiar with each other's lives. This knowledge of your partner not only deepens your connection but protects you against the marital storms and life transitions you will weather together

**1** Ask your partner an open-ended question that invites them to share their opinions, experiences, interests or emotions with you.

A couple examples might be:

- How are you feeling about your job these days?
- What adventures would you like to have in your life right now?

**2** Before you say good-bye this morning, you've learned one thing about what's happening in your partner's life that day.

**3** When you reunite at the end of the day, offer a hug and kiss that lasts at least 6 seconds.

**4** Engage in a stress-reducing conversation at the end of the day today. Spend 20 minutes listening to what happened in your partner's day and responding with empathy. This is not a time to give unsolicited advice. This should be a distraction-free time when your partner feels seen and known.

**5** Before going to sleep, embrace each other. If you had a fight that day and you offer a kiss that lasts only microseconds, use it as an opportunity to release any lingering resentment or irritation from the fight that day. Offer your partner forgiveness and tenderness through your physical affection.

**6** Ask your partner what they dream their life will be like 5 years from now.

## **7** *Date Night*

**Before the date:** Take time to journal about the prompts below:

1. When you were a child, how did your family express anger, sadness, fear, affection, and pride in one another?
2. During your childhood, did your family have to navigate a particular emotional problem such as a parent with aggression, depression, or some other mental illness? How does this effect your current relationships?
3. How do you believe anger, pride, affection, fear, love, and sadness should be expressed? Are any of these difficult for you to express or experience your partner expressing?
4. How are you and your partner different in expressing emotion?

(Adapted from "Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work")

**Date Night Dinner:** Put away distractions, light a candle, and spend time sharing what each of you wrote. Discuss with your partner how knowing this informs the way you live out your relationship.

\*NOTE: The reflections you will share reveal some of the most intimate parts of us. At dinner, make sure you have the time and privacy to discuss these topics in a way that does them justice.

# Week 2: Fostering Appreciation

Fostering appreciation and fondness of your partner is one of the greatest safeguards against contempt, a relationship-destroying conflict habit. These exercises are here to help you develop the habit of cherishing your partner.

**8** Before going to sleep, tell your partner a quality you admire about them or an action they did today that you are grateful for. Be sincere and specific!

**9** When you are away from your partner, reflect on this thought, and then take a moment to act on it.

- Thought: My partner is an interesting person
- Task: Plan something to ask your partner about tonight that interests both of you

**10** Set a timer for 5 minutes and meditate on your partner and what you treasure about them. Find a moment today to share with your partner one of the things you treasure about them.

**11** When you are away from your partner, reflect on this thought, and then take a moment to act on it.

- Thought: I get lots of support in this relationship
- Task: think of a time your partner was very supportive of you

**12** When you catch your partner doing something you admire, offer a genuine appreciation right then and there. You might say something like “I love the way you...” or “Thank you for...” These small gestures of affirmation develop a positive habit that reinforces your fondness for each other. When reinforced over time, this will become a safeguard against contempt—a destructive relational pattern that breaks down the bond in a relationship

**13** When you are away from your partner, reflect on this thought, and then take a moment to act on it.

- Thought: We have come a long way together
- Task: Think of all you have accomplished as a team

## **14** *Date Night*

**Before the date:** Choose ten qualities you cherish in your partner. For each one, think of one recent occasion when your partner displayed it. Then say to yourself, “I am really lucky to be with my partner.” When you are done, write a love letter to your partner expressing how much you cherish your partner for these qualities.

**Date Night Activity:** Read your love letter aloud to your partner during a romantic date.

# Week 3: Turning Toward

The small moments, when you turn toward your partner, have a much greater impact on your relationship than any elaborate getaway. Turning toward your partner is a small and simple act that yields substantial results.

## 15

From the list of activities below, circle the 3 that you most appreciate your partner having done or that you enjoy doing most with your partner. Take a moment to thank your partner today for having turned toward you in this way

- Talk about how your days went when you reunite at the end of the day
- Shop for groceries
- Cook dinner
- Clean house, do laundry
- Help each other with a self-improvement plan (e.g., exercise, a new career, etc)
- Text each other during the workday
- Eat breakfast together during the workweek
- Do yard work, shovel the driveway, do home repairs, car maintenance
- Exercise together
- Watch tv or stream videos together
- Order takeout
- Listen to music or podcasts together
- Take your child to lessons
- Pay bills
- Commute to work together
- Celebrate milestones in your lives
- Dream about your future together.
- Play a board game
- Run errands together
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**16** Do or say something today that you know will make your partner laugh

**17** When your partner seems stressed, take a moment to genuinely ask, "How can I support you right now?"

**18** When tension rises, try using one of the following repair attempts. This will help you put the breaks on the conflict and reconnect

- "I'm getting scared"
- "I need things to be calmer right now"
- "Can I have a kiss?"
- "This is important to me. Please listen"
- "I really blew that one"
- "I want to be gentler toward you right now, and I don't know how"
- "Tell me what you hear me saying"
- "I agree with part of what you're saying"
- "I am thankful for..."
- "Give me a moment. I'll be back"
- "My part of the problem is..."
- "I love you"
- "One thing I admire about you is..."



**19** Intentionally put distractions away when you get home. When you reunite at the end of the day, share about how your days went. Follow up with your partner with an open-ended question.

**20** Learn to embrace your partner's needs by switching your motto from "Yes, but..." to a helpful "Yes, and..." when your partner makes a request. This positive attitude will strengthen and reinforce the romance, fun, and sense of adventure in your relationship.

## **21** *Date Night*

**Before the date:** Make a list of things you notice make your partner "light up." Perhaps it is a favorite food, you offering to give them a massage, their favorite music, an activity they love to do together, or way they like to receive love.

Plan a date night for your partner that incorporates one or more of the things on this list.

# Week 4: Learning to Soothe

Your ability to soothe yourself in the midst of conflict will give you and your partner the opportunity to turn the conflict into a catalyst for healing. Your ability to soothe each other will help you associate your relationship with relaxation, comfort, and safety rather than stress.

**22** A body scan meditation draws our awareness to our bodies so that we can respond to ourselves as we listen to what our bodies can teach us about the emotional space we are in.

1. Begin by lying down or sitting in a comfortable position
2. Take a few deep breaths. Slow your breath down and notice as your abdomen expands and contracts with each breath
3. Bring your attention to your feet by observing any sensations you experience in your feet. If you notice pain, gently breathe into the tension and visualize the tension leaving your body through your breath.
4. When you feel ready, continue this practice with each part of your body as you gradually move from your feet until you reach the top of your head. Pay attention to where you might feel any tightness, pain, or pressure.

When you are finished, read through the following descriptions of emotions and how they manifest in the body. Which emotions do you identify with today?

- Loved- a sense of feeling valued, understood, and heard. Warmth in the heart. Lightness of body.
- Fear/Anger- Fear is usually masked by anger. Fear—pounding heartbeat, dilated pupils, increased breathing, tightened skin, extreme alertness. Anger—tightened jaw, upwelling in the chest, gritted teeth, dilated pupils, angry thoughts.

- Shame- an intense sense of being faulty, wrong, or inferior at the core of our being. A burning feeling in the stomach. A sensation of the body shrinking. Spiraling inward in the stomach or chest or both. Constricted throat. Difficulty in speaking. Heaviness on the chest and difficulty breathing.
- Amused- a light feeling of humor or good spirit. Grins and smiles.
- Abandoned- a sense of loss, being left, pushed out, forgotten, minimized, betrayed, feeling vulnerable. Feeling physically small. A dot. Lost at sea.
- Embarrassed- an emotion arising from being exposed, caught in the act, confronted, ridiculed. Feeling flushed. Heat or redness in the face. Shortened breath. Stomach flutters.
- Betrayed- Lied to, being deceived in meaning, feeling fooled, spiraling inward. Weakness in the limbs.
- Satisfied- a sense of feeling full inside, rested, not worried, trustful thoughts. Being in the moment. Not wandering. Being in the body. Centered to earth.
- Hopeful- an expectation that things will work out, trusting oneself and others, energy level rises. Breathing is easier.
- Inspired- a sense of hope and wonderment of people and things, colors seem brighter, problems seem to find their right size. More energy in the body. Lightness of foot. Obstacles are secondary to solutions.
- Humiliated- a sense of having the inner self exposed, abused, or taken away by the act of another or self. Vacuumed out. Void. Soul theft.
- Loss or Grief- A sense that something has been taken, a longing for feeling, given the answers to life but unsure of the questions. A schoolyard without children.
- Joy- Coming out of the dark night of the soul with sureness of foot. Divided self reunited. Inner peace. Recognizing the True Self within. Knowing you can trust yourself. Seeing light in self and others. Energy and warmth throughout the body.

(Adult Children of Alcoholics/Dysfunctional Families, p. 162-163)

**23** Ask your partner how they would like to receive comfort from you when they are stressed or hurt. Together, brainstorm a list of things you can do for each other that is comforting. Keep this list somewhere where you will see it frequently.

**24** Take 10 minutes today to engage in self-care. This can be using a weighted blanket, drinking your favorite tea, yoga, listening to music, lighting a candle, or reading your favorite book.

**25** Before going to sleep, give each other a massage. If massages are not enjoyable for you, choose something from the list you both compiled earlier this week.

**26** If you experience tension in your relationship today, stop your conversation. Tell your partner you are feeling flooded and need 20 minutes to calm down before returning to the conversation. Take 20 minutes to do something that is soothing to you (listening to music, going for a walk, petting your dog, etc). This is not a time to come up with a counter argument or fuel your anger. You are taking a break so that you can come back ready to be responsive and attuned to your partner.

**27** Ask your partner what you can do to soothe them. Take a moment to do this with each other. Examples may include brushing their hair, giving a massage, dancing to a song you both love, or cuddling.

## 28 *Date Night*

Prepare a relaxing date night for the two of you to unwind together. Some ideas:

- Put all phones and laptops away. This is time for you to unplug and unwind.
- Go out to dinner (or order in). Whatever it is, keep it simple so you both can relax!
- Take an epsom salt bath together
- Light candles or use an essential oil diffuser
- Treat yourself to your favorite dessert paired with a drink you both enjoy

**29** Develop a ritual for daily or weekly connection. These connection rituals are structured routines you have in your relationship that you each enjoy and depend on. These rituals deepen your sense of togetherness. Examples may include:

- Family dinner every night
- Before going to sleep, holding each other and expressing gratitude
- Doing something together that you both enjoy every weekend
- Giving massages at the end of every work week
- Drinking tea or coffee together every morning

Find what works for you, and let it become a regular time of connection that you can count on every week.

# 30 Celebrate Your Connection

This is an opportunity for the two of you to reaffirm the love you share and the value of your relationship. Below, I guide you through the creation of a formal affirmation letter. You can give this to your partner to read or read it aloud to them. This will be something you and your partner can return to when you need to be reminded of the love you share.

To begin, use the following questions to guide your reflections. If any of the questions do not fit your current situation, feel free to adapt them in a way that makes sense for your relationship.

1. How have you changed as an individual and as a couple from your wedding date to the present day?
2. What are some of your partners deepest fears in your relationship and what are some of the commitments you wish to make to your partner to address these fears?
3. How do you envision your next 10, 20, or 30 years together?
4. How do you feel your love has changed these past years?
5. What challenges have you endured together? How has it changed you?
6. Why are you glad you are in a relationship with your partner?
7. How is marriage different than what you thought on your wedding day?
8. How is your marriage the same as what you envisioned on your wedding day?

Next, spend time writing your letter. You can use the format below to guide you, or you can write your own.

- **Introduction:** Begin by addressing your partner and making a short statement that serves as an opening to your letter.
- **Affirmation:** Express what you admire about your partner. Be specific! How have they inspired you to grow into a better version of yourself?

- **Talk about your relationship:** Express what you appreciate about your relationship. How have the challenges you've faced together changed you? How do you envision your next 10, 20, 30 years together?
- **Express your commitments:** List out new commitments you would like to make in your relationship. If you are aware of some deep fears your partner holds about the relationship, this would be a good time to express what you are committing to do to do your part in not letting those fears become a reality.
- **Closing:** Close with a final line about your relationship and how you feel toward your partner.

*Let's Talk!*

If you would like to continue strengthening your relationship through therapy, send me a message. I would love to continue walking with you on this journey.

-Christie Morgan, MA, LPCC

[christie@embodiedandembraced.com](mailto:christie@embodiedandembraced.com) | 303.900.2083