Between Us: A Practical Guide for Couples

How to Build Clarity and Connection with the Couple Life Reflection Framework (CLRF)

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Preface

This began with a habit: making sense of complexity. For years I designed and led systems — code, teams, organizations — by finding structure inside the noise. Eventually I noticed the same turbulence in the most important system I'm part of: a relationship. If we can map distributed systems, why not the living system between two people?

I didn't want to choose between advice columns and raw emotion, so I started building a bridge: a way to hold **logic and feeling** at the same time. That is how the **Couple Life Reflection Framework (CLRF)** took shape — a simple way for two people to notice their **conditions, needs, and functions**, and turn that awareness into shared language and small, doable choices.

You don't have to be an engineer to use this. Whether you write code, teach, design, lead, parent, or simply care about living together with intention, the same fundamentals help. We all meet familiar frictions — uncertainty, overload, misalignment, conflict — and we all want a steadier rhythm we can live with.

This framework is practical. It turns parallel monologues into a conversation you can navigate. The questions are light but pointed; they lower pressure and make it easier to say what's true. You can use CLRF alone for self-reflection, together for decisions, or in small steps when time is scarce.

What you will find ahead:

- A clear map of **conditions → needs → functions**, so you can see where you are and what matters next.
- Short practices that fit real days, not ideal ones.
- Questions that help you hear each other without forcing a verdict.
- Ways to notice what already works — and to change what doesn't — kindly and clearly.

If you're here, something in you already believes a better rhythm is possible. Take a breath. Begin with one page, one question, one small agreement. Let that be enough for today.

Viktor Jevdokimov
Vilnius, 2025

Chapter 1. Introduction

1. Why a framework for relationships is needed (Problem Space)

Most relationships grow on their own. At first, partners follow feelings, habits, and what culture expects. This carries them for a while, but sooner or later it hits limits: misunderstandings pile up, conflicts return, or the connection feels stuck.

Couples often circle the same surface issues — money, chores, schedules — instead of naming the needs underneath. Talk stays casual and unstructured, so patterns repeat until both partners go quiet. On the other side of the spectrum is therapy: powerful, but often too heavy or expensive. The **Couple Life Reflection Framework (CLRF)** offers something in between: a light structure that supports honest conversation and helps partners see, name, and align their needs.

2. The problem with fantasy visions

Without grounding, partners tend to picture the future as fantasies. These images are personal, idealized, and often unrealistic. Comparing them can cause disappointment or even doubt about compatibility, even when real common ground exists.

CLRF anchors vision work in reality. It starts from actual conditions and needs, turning hope from fragile daydreams into inspiration that can carry weight. It also leaves space for differences, so respect doesn't vanish when dreams diverge.

3. Basic principle: Conditions → Needs → Functions

At its core, CLRF rests on three levels:

- **Conditions** — the facts and environment we live in.
- **Needs** — the requests that arise from those conditions.
- **Functions** — the actions we use to meet those needs.

This simple chain helps partners separate background from request, and request from action. Instead of arguing about "what to do" in the abstract, couples can ask: *What's the condition? What's the need? Which function will we use?*

4. Balance of "I" and "We"

Every relationship has two layers:

- The **"I"** — personal needs and functions that keep each partner whole and growing.
- The **"We"** — shared functions that create closeness, trust, and cooperation.

Balance means the two layers don't compete but reinforce each other. When "I" is respected, "We" grows stronger. When "We" is steady, "I" has room to develop. Together they form resilience and belonging.

5. How to use this framework

CLRF doesn't hand out ready-made answers. It gives a map. Couples use it to move through these stages:

1. Notice current conditions, needs, and functions.
2. Sketch visions of the future — individually, then jointly.
3. Define changes that would bridge the gap.
4. Decide which steps to prioritize.
5. Shape principles and strategies for staying aligned.

Each stage makes it easier to talk without blame, reflect without judgment, and move forward without pressure. The work is done in small steps. That's how lasting change is built.

6. CLRF Vision and Mission

Vision

Every couple should be able to reach clarity about their needs without jargon, endless trial and error, or the cost of therapy. With CLRF, partners can shift from overwhelm to calm, from doubt to trust, and from isolation to belonging.

Mission

CLRF is a practical framework — book, exercises, app — that helps couples see conditions, needs, and functions, structure their conversations, and stay rooted in lived experience. It equips them to face challenges with respect, curiosity, and playfulness.

7. CLRF Values and Beliefs

Values

- Clarity over confusion
- Simplicity over complexity
- Real connection over digital noise
- Mutual respect over one-sided wins
- Playfulness over heaviness
- Belonging over indifference
- Patience over haste

Beliefs

- Every couple faces alignment gaps — it's part of being human.
- Structure lowers friction and opens deeper connection.
- Small, regular talks matter more than rare "big ones."
- Language shapes outcomes: naming lowers defensiveness.
- Emotions are signals, not threats; listened to with curiosity, they guide us to needs.
- Tools are helpers, not replacements.

Quick Start Guide: Your First Conversation

This book is designed to be read in order, but life doesn't always wait.

If you are feeling stuck, disconnected, or overwhelmed right now, this page is for you.

Here is a simple 15-minute exercise to have one productive conversation today. Use it as your first step.

Step 1: Choose the scenario that fits you most today

If you feel disconnected or like you're living parallel lives…

- Turn to **Practice 4: Simplified Diagnostic**.
- Individually, answer just these two questions:
    a. *What do I like about how we live now?*
    b. *What do I need most from you right now?*
- Share only your answers with each other. Don't try to solve anything yet — just listen.

If you feel overwhelmed by chores and responsibilities…

- Turn to **Practice 4: Simplified Diagnostic**.
- Individually, pick one or two *key conditions* related to household or work schedules.
- Then, name one *personal strength* that supports your relationship.
- Share these with each other. The goal today is not to fix everything, but to acknowledge the pressure and appreciate each other's strengths.
    - *(For a deeper tool on this, see Practice 9: RACI later in the book.)*

If you feel anxious about the future…

- Turn to **Practice 5: Individual Vision**.
- Don't complete the whole page. Just answer this one question:
    - *What is most important to me in a relationship?*
- Share your answers. The goal isn't to create a five-year plan, but to connect on your core values.

Step 2: Take a breath and talk

Choose one of these paths and give it about 15 minutes.

Keep it light: short answers, gentle listening, no pressure to solve.

Step 3: Bridge back to the book

This single conversation is just a starting point.

To understand the deeper patterns behind these feelings and to build lasting change, continue with **Chapter 2**, where we explore the *Conditions* that shape your life together.

Chapter 2. Conditions

Conditions are the backdrop of your life together. They don't ask for permission; they set the stage. Seeing them clearly helps you decide which needs are being pulled forward and which actions are worth trying next.

Categories of conditions

1. Material – housing, finances, household.
2. Time – work schedules, free time, rhythm of life.
3. Social – family, friends, community, social roles.
4. Cultural and value conditions – faith, worldview, values, cultural environment.
5. Non-material personal – health, emotional background, personal space.

1. Material conditions

These include housing, income, financial stability, the split of household duties, and the shape of daily routines. It's no surprise that limited space can create tension or that unstable finances can keep both partners on edge. Yet these are also chances to act together. A simple shared plan — who does what by when, what we postpone, what we protect — turns a stressful topic into a steadying one and slowly builds trust that outlasts money or square meters.

2. Time conditions

When you map your time openly — where it overlaps, where it doesn't — you can trade small adjustments (bedtimes, errands, quiet hours) that make the week feel shared instead of mismatched.

3. Social conditions

Naming these dynamics out loud reduces the "invisible pressure" that breeds resentment. It also gives you a moment to thank the people who actually help, which makes boundaries easier to hold.

4. Cultural and value conditions

Different values will surface sooner or later; treating them as data points rather than verdicts keeps the conversation moving. Looking for one value you both care about — fairness, freedom, honesty — creates a place to stand while you sort out the rest.

5. Non-material personal conditions

Protecting your own footing matters. Small care routines — like sleep windows, a screen-free break, or a short walk — lower the general noise level, while clear signals ("I need 30 minutes alone," "I'm available after eight") help both of you navigate needs without guesswork.

Conclusion

Conditions aren't right or wrong — they're the weather. Naming the weather lets you pack the right gear: which needs are active, which functions you'll lean on this week, and which experiments are worth a try.

Chapter 3. Needs

Needs are the internal requests that appear in response to real conditions. They point to what matters right now and guide both shared and personal action. Distinguishing **conditions** (facts) from **needs** (requests) prevents a lot of confusion.

Categories of needs

1. Physiological / basic — health, safety, sexual closeness
2. Emotional / psychological — love, recognition, support, emotional safety
3. Development / growth — learning, self-realization, novelty and experiences
4. Shared / couple — common goals, traditions, time together, a sense of “we”
5. Social / external — recognition as a couple, support network, fit with the environment

1. Physiological / basic

These needs keep life stable: sleep, health, food, physical and financial safety, sexual closeness. When they’re thin, tension shows up everywhere else. A simple check — *Are we sleeping, eating, and recovering well enough to function?* — often explains more than a long argument. Protecting these basics first reduces background stress and makes every other conversation easier.

2. Emotional / psychological

These needs ask to be seen, valued, and safe with each other — love, attention, respect, reassurance. They’re met in small, repeatable ways: eye contact, timely replies, warmth after a hard day, naming what you appreciate. When these micro-signals are missing, doubt grows; when they’re present, trust and closeness accumulate.

3. Development / growth

People need movement: learning, mastery, self-expression, new experiences. Stagnation feels like a fog. Name one area you want to grow in and one tiny step you can take this month; invite your partner to protect that step. Mutual support here turns “someday” into progress you can point to.

4. Shared / couple

These needs shape the identity of “we”: goals, projects, rituals, time that is clearly ours. Pick one shared rhythm (weekly walk, slow coffee, Sunday planning) and let it anchor the week. Visible rhythms create belonging and make it easier to weather busy seasons.

5. Social / external

The outside world matters: family, friends, community, and how your life fits the surrounding environment. Map the supports you have and the pressures you feel; thank the former and set boundaries with the latter. Clear signals to others protect closeness without isolating you.

Difference between conditions and needs

Keep the lens clean:

- **Condition:** a fact, a given — *“We live in a small apartment.”*
- **Need:** a request that follows — *“I need more space / quiet / outside time.”*

This distinction makes plans more realistic. It shifts the conversation from blame — *“We’re stuck here.”* — to curiosity — *“Given this space, what do we actually need?”*

Conclusion

Needs are the compass for vision and for choosing functions. When you name them plainly, you understand yourself and each other faster and pick actions that actually help. Start small: one named need, one next step, one check-in to see if it worked.

Chapter 4. Functions

Functions are the ways you act — together and individually — to meet current needs under real conditions. When you treat them as living behaviors rather than chores, they give energy back instead of draining it.

Categories of functions

1. Shared functions – ensure interaction and shared life.
2. Personal functions – help each person remain whole and develop.

1. Shared functions

They include:

- **Communication**
  Think of it as the engine of the relationship — the way you share feelings, make decisions, and find your way back to each other after conflict. A simple habit like "pause → name what I feel → ask one question" keeps old arguments from looping and turns friction into movement.
- **Support**
  Emotional, practical, financial. Agree on the shape of help before the moment is hot — "When I say 'swamped', please sit with me for five minutes / take the dishes tonight / check the budget with me Thursday." Specific help offered at the right time builds trust much faster than generic promises.
- **Cooperation**
  Who does what, and how you switch when life changes. A visible list of shared tasks with "owner", "backup", and "trade rules" cuts down on score - keeping and keeps fairness from being a feeling to being a system.
- **Intimacy**
  Physical, emotional, intellectual. Protect one small window that doesn't get negotiated away (a device-free half hour, a weekly walk, a slow coffee). Consistency does more for closeness than intensity.
- **Joint development**
  Projects, learning, rituals, new experiences. Pick one tiny thing to build this month—a photo album, two - song dance break, trying a class — and schedule it like anything else you care about. Shared novelty keeps the "we" feeling elastic.

These functions form the foundation of the "we," nurturing connection and resilience over time.

2. Personal functions

They include:

- **Self-care**
  Health, rest, stress habits. Decide one recovery move you'll actually use this week; tell your partner when it happens so they can protect it — your rest is a resource for both of you.
- **Emotional work**
  Self-reflection, regulation, self-worth. A short check-in like "name the feeling → name the need → choose one request" reduces what the relationship has to carry — lighter "I" makes a steadier "we."
- **Hobbies and interests**
  Joy in personal pursuits adds fresh air to the couple's rhythm. Share results, not schedules—"show and tell" brings your partner in without turning hobbies into chores.
- **Social self-realization**
  Work, friends, contribution. Keeping two or three outside connections alive prevents the relationship from carrying the entire weight of recognition.
- **Personal development**
  Learning, practices, new experiences. One micro-experiment per month is enough; confidence grows from reps, not leaps.

These functions help a person stay fulfilled and avoid overloading the relationship. Encouragement from a partner turns individual pursuits into shared pride.

Balance of personal and shared functions

Strong personal functions ease the shared ones: for example, if a person can cope with stress, the partner does not become the sole source of support. Weak personal functions, on the contrary, overload the relationship: when there are no hobbies or friends, the partner has to compensate for everything.

Balance isn't a 50/50 split; it's a feedback loop. When "I" is resourced, "we" needs less firefighting. When "we" is steady, "I" has room to grow. Use small signals — "I'm good / I'm low" — to adjust before strain becomes a story.

Conclusion

Functions are switches you can flip on purpose. Pick a few, make them visible, and let them do the quiet work of keeping the relationship moving.

Chapter 5. Links

Conditions, needs, and functions don't live on separate islands. They connect in a simple chain:

Condition → Need → Function

This chain shows how reality shapes requests and how requests guide action. When you name the links clearly, arguments shrink and next steps appear.

1. Condition → Need

Examples (name the fact, then the request it creates):

- **Little time together → need for closeness.**
  Shift from *"we never meet"* to *"I want to feel close to you."* The request points to what the next page should solve.
- **Financial instability → need for safety and predictability.**
  Once named, you can decide what "safer" means this month (budget review, spending freeze, clear roles).
- **Pressure from relatives → need for autonomy and boundaries.**
  Agree where you say "yes," where you say "not this week," and who delivers the message.
- **Chronic stress → need for emotional shelter.**
  Define what shelter looks like in practice (quieter evenings, fewer asks after 8 p.m., a check-in phrase).

2. Need → Function

Now pick actions that meet the named need:

- **Need: recognition → function: communication.**
  Add a tiny habit: one gratitude or compliment per day, said out loud or in a note.
- **Need: shared time → function: cooperation (planning).**
  Choose one anchor block for the week and protect it like any other appointment.
- **Need: emotional safety → function: support.**
  Use a short script: *"I hear you. Do you want help or just company?"* Then follow the answer.
- **Need: development → function: joint development.**
  Pick one micro-project for the month and schedule the first 30 minutes.

3. Personal functions shape shared ones

When personal functions are strong, the shared space breathes easier.

If someone manages stress, there's less spillover. If hobbies and friendships are alive, a partner isn't the only source of joy or recognition. That space makes curiosity and play easier together.

When personal functions sag, the shared space gets heavy.

Lack of rest, autonomy, or outside support turns the partner into a patch for everything. Noticing the gap — and encouraging one concrete personal step — lightens the load for both.

4. Universal formula

Condition (background) → Need (request) → Function (action mode)

Example:

- **Condition:** lots of work, little time
- **Need:** feel close and stay in touch
- **Shared function:** one gadget-free evening each week
- **Personal function:** plan recovery so there's energy to show up

This sequence turns a vague problem into a plan you can try.

Conclusion

Linking is the move that turns *"We need more closeness"* into *"We'll set aside Thursday night and make it a ritual."* Practice saying the links out loud. The clearer the chain, the easier it is to choose a next step that actually helps.

Chapter 6. Vision

A vision is a picture of the future that a person or couple wants to move toward. It sets direction and gives shape to change. Unlike fantasies, a real vision is built on actual conditions and needs, so it has weight and can guide action. A clear vision fuels hope, gives a sense of belonging, and sparks the courage to act, while leaving space for curiosity about what might come.

1. Individual visions

Each partner begins with their own picture of the future. Write it in the first person: *"I want…"*, *"I see myself…"*. These visions reflect personal needs, dreams, and goals. They won't match completely—and that's fine. Naming them makes the inner world visible and easier to respect, even when it differs.

2. Seeing your partner's vision

One useful step is to write how you imagine your partner's vision: *"I think it's important for you…"*. This simple reflection often reveals gaps in understanding and shows how closely you know each other. Shared back with openness, it builds trust and creates gratitude for being noticed.

3. Joint vision

Once both personal visions are shared, you can sketch a joint picture. It includes what overlaps (the common core) and what stays personal. A good joint vision is realistic enough to be reachable and inspiring enough to energize. Belonging grows when you can point to a shared purpose, and respect deepens when differences are left in view rather than hidden.

4. Personal goals and fantasies

Not every dream can be realized. Still, naming fantasies matters because they reveal values. The wish for *"a house by the sea"* might point to the value of calm and open space. That value can be honored in other forms—quiet weekends, time in nature—even if the house never comes. Curiosity here turns frustration into clearer understanding.

5. Comparing and combining visions

Laying visions side by side helps you see:

- **Overlaps** — the common core that anchors the shared path.
- **Differences** — areas where you compromise or simply protect what's personal.

A combined vision holds both: the shared core and the respected differences. This balance builds a sense of unity without erasing individuality. The ability to carry both strengthens resilience and makes trust in the shared path more real.

Conclusion

A vision is a guide, not a blueprint. It gives direction and inspiration but stays flexible as conditions and needs shift. When practiced with honesty and a light touch, visioning is not only strategic but also connecting — it turns dreams into a map of shared hope.

Chapter 7. Changes

Changes are the bridge between where you are and the future you want. They turn abstract wishes into concrete steps. Changes can be big or small — from a new daily habit to a life-shaping decision. Named clearly, they reduce fear and make progress feel possible.

1. Categories of change

- **Radical** changes are big, life-shaping moves like relocating, switching careers, or deciding about children, and they only work when both partners bring courage and strong support to the table.
- **Compromise** changes are fair agreements on chores, schedules, or family boundaries that reduce friction when they're kept visible and realistic.
- **Micro-changes** are small daily habits—phones down at dinner, a compliment, morning coffee—that quietly build gratitude, connection, and rhythm over time.

2. Gap analysis

Gap analysis compares the current state with the desired future:

- Where we are now.
- Where we want to be.
- What steps could close the gap.

This simple lens turns vague frustration into a list of options you can try. It helps couples move from doubt to clarity about what's next.

3. Examples of changes

- **Little time together → weekly gadget-free evening (micro-change)**, a simple ritual that anchors closeness and calm.
- **Financial instability → joint budget and savings plan (radical)**, a shared step that lowers anxiety and builds trust.
- **Conflicts about chores → visible list and redistribution (compromise)**, a fair reset that reduces resentment and restores respect.

4. Shared and personal changes

Distinguish between:

- **Shared changes** — what concerns the couple together.
- **Personal changes** — what each does for themselves.

Progress comes from both directions. Encouraging a partner's personal change turns it into shared pride. Taking on joint changes strengthens unity.

Conclusion

Change is not a single decision but an ongoing process. It asks for time, small adjustments, and space to revise the plan. Even tiny steps add up when they're repeated. Approached with clarity and mutual support, changes stop feeling like pressure and start feeling like momentum toward growth.

Chapter 8. Prioritization and Strategy

After naming changes, the next step is to decide which matter most and how to carry them out. Without priorities, couples risk overload: too many goals at once lead to burnout or giving up. Clear priorities bring calm and focus, and a shared strategy turns plans into trust and steady progress.

1. Prioritization

Ways to set priorities:

- **Eisenhower Matrix** — sort by importance and urgency, that makes the load visible and easier to manage:
  - Important + urgent → do now.
  - Important + not urgent → plan.
  - Not important + urgent → delegate or shrink.
  - Not important + not urgent → drop.
- **The "Top 3" rule** — pick no more than three key changes for the next 3–6 months.
  Fewer priorities protect energy and make success feel reachable.
- **Balance** — include both shared and personal changes.
  Balance honors individuality and togetherness at the same time.

2. Strategy

A strategy is the set of principles and routines that keep you on course:

- **Principles** — e.g., *"we raise big issues once a week"* or *"we avoid decisions during conflict."*
  Principles create predictability and reduce defensiveness.
- **Rituals** — e.g., weekly planning, monthly retrospective.
  Rituals remind you that you are a team and keep the rhythm steady.
- **Progress checks** — e.g., once a month review the table of changes.
  Reviews make progress visible, which builds recognition and hope.

3. Mini-rituals

Small practices sustain the bigger plan:

- **Daily check-in** — a quick *"How are you today?"* keeps the channel open.
- **Weekly sync** — share plans and moods before the week begins.
- **Monthly retrospective** — ask what worked, what to improve.

These short rituals reduce hidden resentment and keep honesty safe. Done with lightness, they feel less like chores and more like connection.

Conclusion

Prioritization and strategy turn intentions into action. They show what matters now, what can wait, and how to keep moving toward the vision together. Practiced with clarity and encouragement, they make planning not a burden but a source of confidence and belonging.

Chapter 9. Practices from Professional and Personal Toolkit

The **Couple Life Reflection Framework (CLRF)** sets the basics: conditions, needs, and functions. To make changes real, couples can borrow simple practices from professional life and adapt them for daily use. These tools add structure, but used with respect, curiosity, and playfulness, they also strengthen trust and reduce hidden tension.

1. VMOSA (Vision–Mission–Objectives–Strategy–Action)

VMOSA is a roadmap for turning ideas into action:

- **Vision** — where we want to go.
- **Mission** — why it matters.
- **Objectives** — clear goals.
- **Strategy** — how we move.
- **Action** — what we do today.

In couples, VMOSA helps transform vague wishes into a shared plan that feels both possible and hopeful.

2. RACI (Responsible–Accountable–Consulted–Informed)

RACI clarifies roles:

- **Responsible** — who does the task.
- **Accountable** — who makes sure it gets done.
- **Consulted** — who gives input.
- **Informed** — who needs the update.

Applied to finances, chores, or projects, RACI reduces “I thought you were doing it” fights and makes fairness visible.

3. Agile / Scrum practices

Agile offers light routines for staying aligned:

- **Weekly stand-up** — what matters now, what blocks us, what we try next.
- **Retrospectives** — once a month, ask what worked, what didn’t, what to change.
- **Small iterations** — test new habits in short cycles.

These routines prevent overload and turn complaints into curiosity.

4. Kanban and WIP limits

Kanban makes work visible:

- **Board** — to do → in progress → done.
- **WIP limit** — no more than 2–3 active items at once.

Whether planning a renovation, trip, or shared project, Kanban builds transparency and keeps expectations realistic.

5. Wardley Maps

Wardley Maps show how needs and practices evolve — what’s routine and what’s still emerging.

For couples, maps support big choices like relocation, job change, or long-term direction. Mapping together sparks curiosity and broadens perspective.

6. Risk management

Risk thinking prepares for crises:

- What risks exist (financial, health, emotional).
- How to reduce them (reserves, insurance, support).
- How to act if they occur (agreed responses).

Talking through risks lowers anxiety and builds resilience.

7. Situational Leadership (D1–D4)

Situational Leadership shows that support depends on readiness:

- **D1** — eager but inexperienced → give guidance and structure.
- **D2** — first struggles → give support and shared decisions.
- **D3** — growing competence → offer trust and encouragement.
- **D4** — maturity → delegate and allow freedom.

In couples, this helps tell when a partner needs more help and when they

Chapter 10. Conclusion

The **Couple Life Reflection Framework (CLRF)** gives couples a simple way to see what is happening and decide what to do next. It rests on three levels — **conditions**, **needs**, and **functions** — which together turn confusion into a map you can use.

1. Framework in one glance

- **Conditions** — the facts and environment that shape daily life.
- **Needs** — the requests that arise from those facts.
- **Functions** — the actions you choose to meet those needs.

Named in this order, they show where you are, what matters now, and how to move.

2. Practical value

CLRF helps you:

- Avoid mixing up facts with desires.
- Separate the **personal** from the **shared** without losing either.
- Turn open-ended talks into specific next steps.
- Build visions anchored in reality.
- Plan changes without overload.

In practice, this looks like fewer circular arguments, clearer requests, and small wins you can feel during the week.

3. Using CLRF in real life

CLRF doesn't replace feelings or intuition — it gives them shape. Use it regularly, or return to it when the rhythm feels off. A short check of *condition* → *need* → *function* before a tough talk lowers defensiveness and makes it easier to choose a step you both can support.

4. Final note

Relationships are living systems. A framework can't hand you answers, but it can keep the path visible. Used with honesty and a light touch, CLRF helps you find your way back to each other — one page, one question, one small agreement at a time.

Practice 1. Conditions Checklist

This checklist will help you identify the main conditions in your life that influence your relationship. Mark the most important ones and add your own if necessary.

1. Material conditions

☐ Housing (quality, space, stability)

☐ Finances (income, expenses, debts, savings)

☐ Household (division of chores, convenience, appliances)

2. Time conditions

☐ Work schedules (schedule compatibility, workload)

☐ Free time (how it aligns or is divided)

☐ Life rhythm (pace, sleep/rest habits)

3. Social conditions

☐ Family (parents, children, relatives, their influence)

☐ Friends and community (support or pressure)

☐ Social roles (work, status, societal expectations)

4. Cultural and value conditions

☐ Faith / worldview (religion, philosophy, spiritual practices)

☐ Values (honesty, freedom, respect, traditions)

☐ National / cultural environment (customs, language, norms)

5. Non-material personal conditions

☐ Health (physical and mental)

☐ Emotional background (stress, mood, stability)

☐ Personal space and autonomy (time/space for oneself)

My notes and additions

Practice 2. Needs Checklist

This checklist will help you identify personal and shared needs. Choose the most significant ones for you and add your own if needed. You can also set priorities (for example, from 1 to 5).

1. Physiological / basic

☐ Health (sleep, nutrition, physical activity)

☐ Sexual intimacy

☐ Safety (housing, financial stability)

2. Emotional / psychological

☐ Love and attachment (feeling loved and needed)

☐ Recognition and respect (feeling valued in your partner's eyes)

☐ Support and attention (empathy, care)

☐ Emotional safety (ability to be yourself without fear)

3. Development / growth

☐ Personal development (learning, skills, creativity)

☐ Self-realization (sense of meaning and achievement)

☐ Novelty and experiences (travel, hobbies, new practices)

4. Shared / couple

☐ Common goals (the family's future, projects, plans)

☐ Traditions and rituals (shared holidays, routines)

☐ Shared time (quality, not just quantity)

☐ Sense of "we" (identity of the couple, not just two individuals)

5. Social / external

☐ Recognition as a couple (from family, friends, and the community)

☐ Social support (to avoid isolation)

☐ Harmony with the surrounding environment (minimal external pressure)

My notes and additions

Practice 3. Functions Checklist

This checklist will help you identify functions that work well and those that could be improved. Check or jot notes on the current state of each function.

1. Shared functions

☐ Communication – discussing emotions and issues

☐ Decision-making – how we choose and reach agreement

☐ Conflicts – how we handle conflict and restore trust

☐ Support – emotional (listening, hugging)

☐ Support – practical (help with tasks)

☐ Support – financial (contributions, mutual protection)

☐ Cooperation – division of responsibilities

☐ Cooperation – flexibility (switching roles)

☐ Intimacy – physical (sex, touch)

☐ Intimacy – emotional (trust, openness)

☐ Intimacy – intellectual (shared discussions)

☐ Joint development – projects, hobbies, learning

☐ Joint development – traditions and rituals

☐ Joint development – new experiences

2. Personal functions

☐ Self-care – health, rest, stress management

☐ Emotional work – self-reflection, self-regulation

☐ Self-worth – sense of personal significance

☐ Hobbies and creativity – music, drawing, sports, etc.

☐ Social connections – friends, community

☐ Profession and career – contribution, achievements

☐ Personal development – learning, skills

☐ Spiritual practices – faith, philosophy, meditation

☐ Novelty – experiments, travel

☐ Autonomy – personal space, time for oneself

My notes and additions

Practice 4. Simplified Diagnostic

This simplified diagnostic will help each partner identify the main conditions, needs, and functions right now. Fill it out individually first, then discuss together.

Step 1. Individual selection

1. Choose up to 5 key conditions that influence your life right now:

2. Choose up to 5 needs that are most important to you right now:

3. Assess the functions:

- What I do well:
- What I lack:

Step 2. Short answers

Answer freely (in 2–3 sentences):

- What do I like about how we live now?
- What is the hardest for me right now in our relationship?
- Which of my personal strengths supports our relationship?
- What do I need most from you right now?

Step 3. Joint discussion

After filling it out individually, discuss together:

- Where the selected conditions and needs overlap, where they differ.
- What each person does well and where support is needed.
- Read your short answers to each other.

Practice 5. Individual Vision

This practice will help you articulate your vision of the future. Write your answers freely. It is important to write in the first person (“I want…”, “I see myself…”) so that the vision reflects your own desires and goals.

Questions for reflection

1. How do I see myself in 3–5 years?

2. How do I see our relationship in 3–5 years?

3. What is most important to me in a relationship?

4. Which conditions do I want to change in the future?

5. Which needs do I want to meet better than I do now?

6. Which functions (personal or shared) do I want to develop?

7. Which of my personal dreams and fantasies do I want to preserve, even if they are not fully realized?

Conclusion

After you complete it, discuss your vision with your partner. Comparing individual visions helps you find the common core and identify differences that can be incorporated into the shared picture of the future.

Practice 6. Change Table

This table will help translate your vision of the future into concrete steps. Fill it out together: define the current state, describe the desired future, specify the type of change (radical, compromise, or micro-change), and plan the steps.

Now	Desired future	Type of change	Example steps

Note: start with 3–5 key changes to avoid overload. Balance shared and personal steps.

Practice 7. Priority Matrix

This matrix helps you prioritize selected changes. Distribute them into four quadrants based on importance and urgency. Use it as a tool for a joint discussion.

Important and urgent (do immediately)	Important but not urgent (plan)
Not important but urgent (delegate or minimize)	Not important and not urgent (discard)

Note: Start by distributing 3–5 key changes. This helps you focus on what truly matters and reduces overload.

Practice 8. Retrospective Template

A retrospective is a joint discussion that helps you understand what works in your relationship and what can be improved. It is recommended to hold it monthly or quarterly.

Questions for discussion:

1. What went well for us during this period?

2. What was the hardest?

3. What can we do differently next time?

4. What am I grateful to you for?

5. What do I promise to try to change or improve?

Conclusion

A retrospective is not criticism, but a joint search for improvements. It is important to maintain a respectful tone and highlight positive moments.

Practice 9. RACI

This practice helps distribute roles and responsibilities in your relationship. The method is based on the RACI principle: Responsible (who does the work), Accountable (who is ultimately answerable and approves the result), Consulted (whose opinions are sought before a decision), Informed (who is kept updated after decisions and actions). Fill the table together to reduce misunderstandings and conflicts.

Area / task	Responsible (who does the work)	Accountable (who is ultimately answerable and approves the result)	Consulted (whose opinions are sought)	Informed (who is kept updated)
Finances (budget, payments)				
Household chores (cleaning, cooking)				
Children (school, activities)				
Relatives (communication, holidays)				
Leisure and vacation (planning)				

Note: Roles may change over time. The key is transparency and mutual agreement.

Practice 10. Rituals Map

Traditions and rituals create a sense of stability and closeness in your relationship. They can be big family celebrations or small everyday habits. This map will help you record existing rituals and come up with new ones.

1. Our existing traditions and rituals

Examples: weekend breakfasts together, anniversary celebrations, annual vacation.

2. Which new traditions do we want to introduce

Examples: a monthly board-game night, walks together, a family photo album.

3. Personal rituals I would like to keep

Examples: evening reading, morning coffee alone, sports.

Conclusion

Traditions and rituals create a sense of “our world”. Even small habits can become the foundation of closeness and warmth.

Practice 11. Personal Functions

This checklist helps each partner identify which personal functions support their life and relationship. Check which ones are developed and which need attention. Personal functions

☐ Self-care – health, rest, stress management

☐ Emotional work – self-reflection, self-regulation

☐ Self-worth – sense of personal significance

☐ Hobbies and creativity – music, drawing, sports, etc.

☐ Social connections – friends, community

☐ Profession and career – contribution, achievements

☐ Personal development – learning, skills

☐ Spiritual practices – faith, philosophy, meditation

☐ Novelty – experiments and travel

☐ Autonomy – personal space, time for oneself

My notes

What I do well:

What I want to improve:

Conclusion

Developing personal functions reduces the load on shared functions. When each person feels whole and steady, the relationship becomes more harmonious.

Practice 12. Shared Vision

This practice helps you form a shared picture of the future. First, each partner shares their individual vision; then you create a shared one together. It should include a common core (what matches) and respectful acknowledgment of differences (what remains personal).

1. Our common core (overlaps)

What is important for both of us in the future:

2. Our differences (space for the personal)

What remains personal for each:

3. Joint formulation of the vision

Together, formulate 2–3 paragraphs that describe your shared vision:

Conclusion

A shared vision is a guideline, not a rigid plan. It helps you move in the same direction while preserving each partner's individuality.