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Relationship Check-In Conversation

For a simple and comprehensive analysis of your entire relationship, consider discussing the following four elements:

1. How we feel about each other's **self-care**
2. How we feel about our recent **connection/intimacy**
3. Whether things seem reasonably **fair**
4. How well we've managed any moments of **conflict**

1. Self-Care

In intimate relationships, if either one of you is not okay, it directly affects the other. You don't have to be perfect, but you do need to be looking after yourself to a reasonable degree in order to not be an undue worry or burden for your partner. Consider:

- Is each of us doing a *reasonable* amount of self-care, whatever that means (health, wellbeing, stress management, fitness, diet, drug/alcohol use etc.)? If so, great! Move on to number 2. If not:

- What are the controllable changes or adjustments each of us could make to help us be okay for the good of our relationship?

- What aspect of your own self-care could you address?

- How can you reasonably assist each other?

2. Connection/Intimacy

Couple connection (intimacy, bond, closeness) fluctuates for many reasons. Couples can be either too connected (enmeshed, co-dependent, smothered, loss of individual identity) or not connected enough (remote, cold, emotionally distant, virtual strangers). A healthy attachment is somewhere in the middle. And sometimes imbalances occur where one person seems to be trying to connect a lot more than the other. Consider:

- How does each of us feel lately about our connection? If it's fine, great! Move onto number 3. If not:

- In what ways does either of you feel too connected or too disconnected?

- Is there a sense for either of you that one of you is driving the connection more than the other? Does it matter? If so, how could we reduce the imbalance?

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3. Fairness

If either of you perceives that there is something unfair (unjust, unreasonable, inequitable) going on in the relationship, it can affect the whole relationship. Such imbalances need to be addressed. The goal is an arrangement that feels *reasonably* fair to both of you.

- Does the overall arrangement in terms of who does what, division of labour, and roles and responsibilities seem reasonably fair to each of you? If so, great! Move on to number 4. If not:

- What elements of the arrangement seem unfair to you? Describe why you think this, what effect it is having on you, and how it makes you feel about the relationship.

- What specific adjustments could either of you make that would restore what seems like a *reasonably* fair arrangement for both of you?

4. Conflict Management

Conflict (friction, arguing, fighting, debating, negotiating, disagreeing) is inevitable in intimate relationships. Connection and conflict are intertwined. The closer you get, the more conflict is inevitable. Therefore what matters is that the conflict is well managed.

- Does each of you feel that your conflict is mature, reasonable, respectful and constructive? If so, great! Get on with life! If not:

- What effect is the conflict having on your overall feelings towards the relationship?

- What recent conflict behaviour of your own do you regret and would like to address, curb or improve on?

- What recent conflict behaviour of the other would you like them to address, curb, or improve on?

- Are you both practising calm assertiveness or are you being either too aggressive (rude, harsh, violent) or too passive (avoidant, remote, shut down)?

- Are you able to co-regulate? Are you able to do a postponement or time-out when either of you becomes too upset or overwhelmed? Do you reconnect as soon as you are reasonably able?

Done!

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