

DUCKLOW'S

COMMUNICATION COVENANT FOR COUPLES IN CONFLICT

COUPLE AGREEMENT: THIS COVENANT WILL BE READ TOGETHER EACH SUNDAY AND THEN WE WILL ASK ONE ANOTHER IN WHAT WAY CAN WE IMPROVE OUR APPLICATION OF THIS COVENANT IN OUR DAILY LIFE.

1. We will express irritations and annoyances we have with one another in a loving, specific, and positive way rather than holding them in or being negative in general.
 - I will acknowledge that I have a problem rather than stating that you are doing such and such.
 - I will remind myself that controlling my emotional level will get things resolved quicker and make one less inclined to back off from the problem.
 - I will try to figure out what “triggers” me rather than blame my partner on my triggers.

2. We will talk softly.
 - The louder we yell, the less likely we are to be heard. Even if my partner yells, there’s no need for me to yell back.
 - Taking the volume down makes it possible for my partner and I to start focusing on the issues instead of reacting to the noise.
 - Before I say anything I will decide if I would want this statement said to me with the same words and tone of voice.

3. We will not exaggerate or attack the other person during a disagreement.
 - I will stick with the specific issue.
 - I will take several seconds to formulate my words so that I can be accurate.

DUCKLOW'S

6420 FOX STREET, WEST VANCOUVER, BC V7W 2C4
WWW.THEDUCKLOWS.CA | 604 921 9542

- I will consider the consequences of what I say before I say it.
 - I will not use universally disqualifying words like “always,” “all the time,” “everyone,” “never,” etc.
 - I will not “eye roll” or otherwise express contempt.
4. We will take time-outs (temporary, brief separations to soothe self) as we need them.
- I will take time-outs for calming down if I feel that my own anger is starting to elevate.
 - The minimum amount of time for a time-out will be 5 minutes and the maximum 15-20 minutes.
 - If I need time to calm down or self-soothe, I will ask to set the time limit according to the time I feel I need.
 - During the time-out, and in writing, I will first define the problem that is being discussed. Second the areas of agreement in the problem will be listed and then the areas of disagreement will be listed and then three alternate solutions to this problem will be listed.
 - When I come back together I will say to my partner, "I am interested in what you have written during our time-out and I am want you to share this with me."
5. We will search for and find points of agreement while we are in conflict.
- I am aware that there are usually parts of a conflict that can be points of agreement. I will find common ground, even if it's agreeing that there is a problem.
 - I will occasionally summarize our points of agreement.
 - I will look for points of agreement that could lead to a common solution.
6. We will "not let the sun go down on our anger" or run away from each other during an argument.
- I will limit my upset to a reasonable he / she. Then I will approach my partner with my concern.
 - I will not avoid or postpone unnecessary conflict by out-waiting my partner to express irritations or annoyances.
 - If we have discussed an issue for 15-20 minutes then we will then take a time-out and put into practice the written procedure discussed under #3.

7. We will get curious, not defensive; responsive, not interrupting.
 - Defending myself, whether by vehemently protesting my innocence or rightness or by turning the tables and attacking, escalates the fight. I understand this.
 - Instead of upping the ante, I will ask for more information, details, and examples. I will listen curiously.
 - I understand that there is usually some basis for the other person's complaint. When I meet a complaint with curiosity, I make room for shared understanding.

8. We will carefully listen to the other person when he/she is talking (rather than spending that time thinking up a defense).
 - If I find myself formulating my response while the other person is talking I will say, "Please stop and repeat what you said because I was not listening and I want to hear what you were saying."
 - If we are having difficulty hearing one another when a statement is made we will repeat back to the other person what we heard them saying and what we thought they were feeling.

9. We will not toss in past failures of the other person during an argument.
 - I will remind myself that a past failure has been discussed and forgiven. True forgiveness means it will not be brought up to the other person again. I accept this.
 - I will remind myself that bringing up a past failure cripples the other person from growing and developing.
 - If I catch myself bringing up a past failure, I will ask the other person's forgiveness. I will also agree to not bring up past failures in the future.

10. We will make concessions.
 - I accept and understand that small concessions can turn our situation around. As I give a little, it makes room for my partner to make concessions too. Small concessions can lead to larger compromises.
 - I know that compromise doesn't have to mean that we're meeting each other exactly 50-50. Sometimes it's a 60-40 or even 80-20 agreement. This isn't about scorekeeping. It's about finding a solution that is workable for both of us.

11. When something is important enough for my partner to discuss, it is equally important to me as well.

- If I have difficulty talking about what the other person wants to discuss, I will say to her / him, "I know this topic is important to you and I do want to hear this even though it is a bit difficult for me."

12. We will face each other when we are in conflict discussion.

- I will sit in the same room facing my partner when we are in conflict (face-to-face about 2 feet from each other). This way there will be no shouting.
- Positive touch (e.g. holding hands, knee-to-knee touch, etc.) is important for us. Never will our closeness be threatening or harmful.
- In implementing this agreement, and all the principles of communication in this covenant, we will eliminate outside interferences to our communication such as the cell phones, computer, television, etc.

Sign this document as an agreement that you understand and accept the principles.

Date:

Husband:

Wife: