

FACT SHEET

Couples & Relationship Issues

All relationships go through periods of strain. Problems usually grow when communication becomes defensive, needs go unspoken, or partners stop feeling like they are on the same team.



clear, practical, supportive

WHAT IT CAN LOOK LIKE

- Frequent misunderstandings, criticism, silence, or conflict that never fully resolves
- Feeling distant, lonely, or emotionally unsafe in the relationship
- Reduced affection, intimacy, warmth, or shared enjoyment
- Repeated arguments about the same issue with no progress
- Resentment building because expectations are unclear or unspoken

WHAT CAN CONTRIBUTE

- Stress, parenting demands, work pressure, or major life changes
- Different communication styles or conflict patterns
- Broken trust, secrecy, betrayal, or repeated disappointment
- Unclear boundaries, uneven responsibility, or controlling behaviour
- Mental health, health changes, or unresolved family-of-origin patterns

Why it matters

- Relationship strain often affects sleep, mood, concentration, and confidence.
- When couples feel threatened or unheard, they tend to protect themselves rather than connect.
- Small moments of repair matter more than trying to win the argument.
- Healthy relationships need both honest communication and emotional safety.

Helpful reminders

- You can slow a conversation down without avoiding it.
- Understanding each other matters more than proving a point.
- Support is still worthwhile even if only one person is ready to start.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES

Choose the ideas that feel realistic for you. Small consistent changes usually work better than trying to change everything at once.

- Choose the right time. Difficult conversations go better when neither person is flooded, rushed, or distracted.
- Start with the issue, not the attack. Describe what is happening and how it affects you without using blame language.
- Listen to understand before responding. Reflect back what you heard so your partner feels accurately understood.
- Look for the pattern beneath the problem. Many arguments are really about safety, trust, fairness, or feeling valued.
- Make small repair attempts. This can include apologising clearly, softening your tone, or checking what would help now.
- Protect friendship. Time together that is not only about logistics or conflict strengthens the relationship base.
- Get clear about boundaries if there is disrespect, fear, aggression, or coercion.
- Seek professional support when issues feel entrenched, repetitive, or too difficult to shift alone.
- Track what makes the problem better or worse. A short note in your phone or diary can reveal patterns you can actually use.
- Aim for steady progress, not perfection. Review what helped this week and keep the plan realistic enough to repeat.



TRY THIS TODAY

Start with one small, achievable step.

- Ask: "What feels hardest for you about us right now?" and listen without interrupting.
- Name one thing you appreciate that your partner does.
- Choose one small change both of you can practice this week.

WHEN TO GET EXTRA SUPPORT

- Conflict feels repetitive, damaging, or hard to repair.
- There is fear, coercion, aggression, or emotional or physical abuse.
- Trust has broken down and you do not know how to move forward.
- You or your partner would benefit from individual or relationship support.