

# The Communication Style Assessment

Learn How You Talk Before You Learn How You Fight

## PURPOSE

*This tool identifies how each partner communicates — especially under pressure — so you can build intentional communication habits before they are needed in crisis. Honest answers here will save your marriage countless conflicts later.*

## INSTRUCTIONS

Complete independently and honestly. Share together after both are finished. This is not a test of your relationship — it is an investment in it.

## PART 1 — YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE

Rate yourself honestly from 1 (rarely) to 5 (consistently):

Statement	Rating
I express my feelings clearly without shutting down	___
I listen fully before forming my response	___
I stay calm during difficult conversations	___
I take responsibility without deflecting	___
I ask questions before drawing conclusions	___
I repair quickly after conflict	___
I express appreciation and affirmation regularly	___
I address issues directly rather than avoiding them	___

**My Total:**                      \_\_\_ / 40

**The communication skill I am most confident in:**

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**The communication skill I need to grow the most:**

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## PART 2 — YOUR PRESSURE PATTERN

**When I am hurt or angry, my instinct is to:**

- Withdraw and go silent
- Pursue until the issue is resolved
- Escalate emotionally
- Shut down completely
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**The communication habit I know I need to change:**

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## PART 3 — THE FOUR HORSEMEN CHECK

Dr. John Gottman identified four communication patterns that predict marital breakdown. Check any you recognize in yourself — not your partner.

### ■ CRITICISM

What it looks like: I attack my partner's character rather than the specific behavior.

The antidote: Raise the issue gently, using 'I' statements and specific requests.

### ■ CONTEMPT

What it looks like: I express superiority, sarcasm, or disrespect during conflict.

The antidote: Build a culture of appreciation. Express fondness and admiration daily.

### ■ DEFENSIVENESS

What it looks like: I counter-attack or make excuses rather than taking responsibility.

The antidote: Listen for any truth in the complaint. Take responsibility for your part.

### ■ STONEWALLING

What it looks like: I shut down, disengage, or walk away when overwhelmed.

The antidote: Learn to self-soothe first. Return to the conversation when regulated.

**The horseman I am most prone to — and my commitment to address it:**

## PART 4 — OUR COMMUNICATION AGREEMENTS

Complete this section together after both partners have finished Parts 1-3 independently.

**Three non-negotiable communication agreements for our marriage:**

1.

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3.

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**The topic we most need to learn to discuss without conflict:**

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**One communication practice we will commit to doing weekly:**

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## YOUR COMMITMENT

*"I am committed to becoming a communicator my spouse can trust — honest enough to speak the truth, humble enough to listen fully, and disciplined enough to choose my words carefully even when my emotions are loudest. I will not wait for conflict to teach me these skills. I am choosing to learn them now."*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_