

The Everyday Connection Workbook

Small, kind habits for closer relationships.

- 01 Notice your connections ✓
- 02 Turn toward small bids ✓
- 03 Listen to understand ✓
- 04 Ask better questions ✓
- 05 Disagree kindly ✓
- 06 Show appreciation ✓
- 07 Your 30-day plan ✓

START HERE

Before You Begin

Close relationships aren't built on secret tricks. They grow from small, ordinary moments: how you listen, how you respond when someone reaches out, how you handle a disagreement. This workbook helps you practise a few of those moments on purpose.

How to use it

- It works for any close relationship: a partner, a friend, family or a coworker.
- Print it, or copy the tables into a notebook.
- Do one step at a time. Most take 10 to 20 minutes.
- Try things gently. Small and steady beats big and short-lived.

What's inside

STEP	TOPIC	YOU'LL FINISH WITH
01	Your connections	A simple map of the people who matter to you
02	Small bids	A way to notice and answer everyday reach-outs
03	Listening	A three-part listening habit
04	Better questions	Conversation prompts that go past small talk
05	Kind disagreement	A gentle way to raise a problem
06	Appreciation	A daily thank-you habit
07	30-day plan	A checklist and a connection tracker

A QUICK NOTE

This is everyday relationship education, not counseling or therapy. If a relationship feels unsafe, you deserve support: in the U.S. the National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-7233, or text START to 88788.

STEP 01

Notice Your Connections

Start by looking at who's already in your life. No judging, just noticing.

Your connection map

List up to six people who matter to you. Rate how connected you feel right now, from 1 (distant) to 5 (very close).

NAME	WHO THEY ARE TO ME	TODAY	IN 30 DAYS

Three quick questions

QUESTION	MY ANSWER
Who do I feel most at ease with, and why?	
Which relationship would I most like to grow?	
What usually gets in the way (time, phone, stress)?	

STEP 02

Turn Toward Small Bids

A "bid" is any small attempt to connect: a comment, a question, a joke, a sigh, a text with a photo. How we respond to these tiny moments adds up over time.

Psychologist John Gottman, known for his long-running research on couples, describes three ways to respond to a bid. In his studies, couples who stayed together turned toward each other's bids much more often than couples who later split up.

RESPONSE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	EXAMPLE
Turning toward	You notice and respond, even briefly	"Oh wow, show me!"
Turning away	You miss it or ignore it	Keep scrolling, no reply
Turning against	You respond with irritation	"Can't you see I'm busy?"

You don't have to drop everything. Even "I want to hear this. Give me five minutes?" counts as turning toward.

Bid spotting

A BID I NOTICED	HOW I RESPONDED	NEXT TIME I'LL...

STEP 03

Listen to Understand

Most of us listen while planning what to say next. Try listening just to understand, before you fix, advise or reply.

The three-part listening habit

WHAT TO DO	
1. Put the phone down	Face the person. Small signals tell them they have your attention.
2. Reflect back	"So the hardest part was..." or "It sounds like you felt..."
3. Ask what they need	"Do you want ideas, or do you just want me to listen?"

Swap the reply

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
"You should just..."	"What do you think you'll do?"
"That's nothing, at least..."	"That sounds really frustrating."
"I had something like that once..."	"Tell me more about what happened."

STEP 04

Ask Better Questions

Questions that start with how, what or tell me invite stories instead of yes-or-no answers.

LIGHT	DEEPER
What was the best part of your day?	What's been on your mind lately?
What are you looking forward to this week?	What's something you're proud of that people don't know about?
What's a small thing that made you laugh recently?	Is there anything I could do that would make your week easier?
What would your perfect lazy Sunday look like?	What's something you'd like us to do more of together?

Psychologist Arthur Aron's well-known "36 questions" study found that strangers who took turns asking gradually more personal questions felt closer afterward. Going a little deeper, step by step, tends to work better than jumping straight in.

My own questions to try

QUESTION	WHO I'LL ASK

STEP 05

Disagree Kindly

Disagreements are normal in every close relationship. How you start the conversation often shapes how it goes.

A gentle start-up

Talk about yourself and what you need, rather than what's wrong with the other person.

HARSH START	GENTLE START
"You never help around the house."	"I'm feeling stretched thin. Could we split the chores differently this week?"
"You're always on your phone."	"I miss talking to you. Can we have dinner without phones tonight?"
"You forgot again."	"I felt let down when this slipped. Can we find a way to remember it?"

If it gets heated

- Take a break of 20 minutes or more, and say when you'll come back to it.
- Use the break to calm down, not to plan your next argument. A short walk helps many people.
- Come back and start again, gently.

A topic I'd like to raise, gently

MY ANSWER
I feel...
about...
What I'd like is...

STEP 06

Show Appreciation

It's easy to notice what's missing and overlook what's going well. Saying thank you out loud keeps the good things visible.

Make it specific

GENERAL	SPECIFIC
"Thanks for everything."	"Thanks for picking up groceries when I was swamped. It really helped."
"You're great."	"I love how you always remember to ask about my mom."

Ways to show it

- Say it in person, or send a two-line text.
- Leave a short note where they'll find it.
- Do one small, thoughtful thing without being asked.
- Tell someone else what you appreciate about them.

This week's thank-yous

WHO	WHAT I APPRECIATED

STEP 07

Your 30-Day Plan

Four weeks, one focus per week. Tick each item when it's done.

WEEK	ACTION	DONE
WEEK 1: NOTICE	Fill in your connection map (Step 01)	
	Spot three bids and turn toward them	
	Have one phone-free meal or call	
WEEK 2: LISTEN	Practise the three-part listening habit daily	
	Ask one deeper question from Step 04	
	Swap one "fix-it" reply for a reflection	
WEEK 3: REPAIR	Raise one small issue with a gentle start	
	Take a calm break if things get heated	
	Apologise for one thing, simply and sincerely	
WEEK 4: APPRECIATE	Give one specific thank-you each day	
	Reach out to someone you've lost touch with	
	Redo your connection map and compare	

Connection tracker: tick each day you turn toward a bid or say thank you

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

KEEP GOING

Next Steps

Connection grows in small moments, repeated. Keep turning toward people, especially on ordinary days.

EASIER CONVERSATIONS

The Small Talk Fix is our short PDF guide to starting and keeping conversations going, with simple prompts for when your mind goes blank.

See The Small Talk Fix →

This is ApexShiftHub's own paid guide.

GROW YOUR CIRCLE

Make Friends in Real Life is our practical PDF guide to meeting people and turning acquaintances into real friends.

See Make Friends in Real Life →

This is ApexShiftHub's own paid guide.

Want to read more?

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work by John Gottman and Nan Silver, and *Hold Me Tight* by Sue Johnson, are popular, readable books on relationships. Your local library likely has them.

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This workbook shares general relationship education and isn't counseling or therapy. It contains no affiliate links.