

Holley Counseling
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Daily Check-in 21-day Challenge

Please read this introduction out loud together the first time you do the daily check-in so you can start on the same page. The Daily communication check-in is designed to reinforce the kind of new communication changes you are wanting to sustain, which you are learning in counseling. Since our old communication patterns are very solidly in place, it is recommended that you do these exercises 21 days in a row in order to break the old and create new patterns of healthy communication.

With Patrick you have learned about 4 quadrants of communication: *Receiving* and *Giving*, and *Pushing* and *Pulling*. Receiving and Giving, clearly are the two positive ones, in the “flow” of love and intimacy. To summarize, **receiving** is about the unconditional acceptance of the other which is often achieved through empathy and reflective listening (especially important during conflict or tense topics). Remember you don’t have to agree to accept the other person. Everyone has their own experience and we certainly all want our experience and perception to be accepted. **Giving**, or what I call “Engaging” is demonstrating a willingness to share of one’s self rather than withdrawing, appeasing, or failing to communicate thoughts and feelings about myself or about us a couple. Just as there are two positives components of healthy communication, there are two unhealthy ones, or what I refer to as obstacles to the flow of love. The first one is **Pushing**. *Pushing* is a failure to *receive* the other unconditionally, but rather pushing myself and my ideas, or my agenda on the other. It is a form of entanglement with the other rather than accepting differences. This is often characterized by argumentation, fighting, insisting, expecting, clinging, negative or harsh tone in the voice, etc. The second obstacle to the flow is **Pulling**. *Pulling* is when we pull ourselves back from engaging in the relationship, especially during conflict. It is characterized by withdrawal, fleeing, appeasing, stonewalling and avoidance.

In summary, positive communication or intimacy is about unconditionally giving and receiving to and from one another using qualities like empathy, acceptance and collaboration. Agreeing and disagreeing are viewed as secondary to acceptance and are relatively unimportant to harmony. And the obstacles to this flow is when we **push** ourselves on the other or **pull** ourselves back from the other. Until these 4 concepts are integrated into your way of communicating, you may want to consider rereading this introduction each time you do a check-in until the concepts sink in.

Here are the instructions for this daily exercise: Each of you are invited to discuss only *your own* experience and *your own* behaviors, with the exception of affirming the other person. Please be aware of the tendency we all have to want to focus on what the other person did wrong or what they “should” have done. In this practice we are reinforcing the idea of letting each person being responsible for their own growth and focusing on changing ourselves. Here we go:

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1. One person starts by affirming in the other person in every way you have noticed that they have done well in communication, anything in the “receiving” or “giving” category, or noticing a softer or gentler communication (for the one who tends to “fight” or push), or noticing more sharing and engaging (for one who tended to “flee” or “appease” or pull). Affirm any positive changes you have seen. Then let the other person do the same.
2. Next, let one person *own* anything in their communication today that fell in the “pull” or “push” category that you can acknowledge and apologize for. Then let the other person take their turn.
3. Since you are both trying to steer clear of pointing fingers, if you want to invite your spouse to indicate anything about your behavior today that has been hurtful, feel free to do so. This way one is inviting the other to give input rather than just pointing fingers without invitation. Be sure, if you do discuss something in the other person that was hurtful, to do it without accusation, with gentleness, only observing, and expressing your feelings. Try not to attribute motives or labels to them, because only they know their motives.