

When You're Afraid to Bring Up Problems - Checklist

Use this before the conversation. Catch the thought first, then say the actual thing.

Before You Start

- ☐ ☐ Write the worst-case version of what you're afraid will happen, on paper, not just in your head
- ☐ ☐ Name the distortion running it: Mind Reading, Catastrophizing, Personalization, Fortune Telling, or All-or-Nothing Thinking
- ☐ ☐ Say the one-sentence reframe out loud, once
- ☐ ☐ Pick your opening line before you walk into the room

What To Watch For

- ☐ ☐ The half-second before you open your mouth when a thought shows up and shuts the door
- ☐ ☐ Waiting for the "right moment" that keeps not arriving
- ☐ ☐ Rehearsing the speech so long that it feels too polished to actually say out loud
- ☐ ☐ Treating a guess about how she'll respond as if it's already happened

What To Say

- ☐ ☐ "There's something I've been wanting to bring up, and I keep avoiding it because I'm scared of how it'll go. I'm going to say it anyway."
- ☐ ☐ "Last time we talked about this, it went sideways fast. Can we try this slower, and if it gets heated, take a break instead of pushing through?"
- ☐ ☐ "Just something I've noticed that's been sitting between us. Can we figure out what's going on there together?"
- ☐ ☐ "I don't need the perfect way to say this anymore. I'm just going to say it plainly."

What Not To Do

- ☐ ☐ Don't wait to feel totally calm before you start. The calm rarely shows up on its own.
- ☐ ☐ Don't open with a list of all the times this has happened before.
- ☐ ☐ Don't apologize for bringing it up before you've even said what it is.
- ☐ ☐ Don't push through if the conversation is heating up fast. Take the break instead.

Repair Move

If it goes sideways: "I can see this isn't landing well right now. I'm not trying to corner you. Can we come back to this tomorrow?"

Success Check

- ☐ ☐ You named the specific distortion before the conversation, not just "nerves"
- ☐ ☐ You brought up the actual topic instead of hinting at it and hoping she'd notice