

When You're Afraid to Be Vulnerable With Her -- Checklist

Use this before a vulnerability attempt. Keep it quick -- this is a field tool, not a reading exercise.

Before You Start

- ☐ ☐ Do the two-minute solo prep: name what happened, what it felt like in your body, and what emotion you'd call it
- ☐ ☐ Choose the right rung for this moment (preference, reaction, fear, or need)
- ☐ ☐ Pick a calm moment -- not right before bed, not during a disagreement
- ☐ ☐ Put your phone down before you start

What To Watch For

- ☐ ☐ Notice if your instinct is to soften the disclosure into something safer -- resist it
- ☐ ☐ Watch for the urge to add "but I'm fine" after sharing something real
- ☐ ☐ If she doesn't respond immediately, that is not rejection -- give her time
- ☐ ☐ If you feel the conversation getting intense, slow down before adding more

What To Say

Choose the script that fits the moment:

- ☐ ☐ **Small Opener:** "Honestly, it was a rough one. I didn't handle something the way I wanted to, and I'm still sitting with it."
- ☐ ☐ **Delayed Reaction:** "What you said this morning -- about me being checked out -- I've been sitting with it. I think you were right. I didn't like hearing it, which is probably why I went quiet."
- ☐ ☐ **Fear Disclosure:** "I'm worried that I've been so checked out for so long that you've stopped expecting anything from me. And I'm scared I don't know how to fix that."
- ☐ ☐ **Need Statement:** "When I'm getting it right -- when I'm actually here with you -- I need to know that. I don't always know what it looks like from your side."
- ☐ ☐ **Re-Entry:** "I shut down earlier. I know I did. I'm sorry for that. I heard what you said and I wasn't ready to respond. What I was feeling was [name it]. Can we try again?"

What Not To Do

- ☐ ☐ Don't retract a disclosure because she didn't respond with warmth immediately

- ☐ ☐ Don't turn a vulnerability attempt into a bid for reassurance
- ☐ ☐ Don't skip rungs -- start small and build trust with her response before going deeper
- ☐ ☐ Don't add a solution right after a fear disclosure -- let it sit
- ☐ ☐ Don't apologize for saying something true

Repair Move

If it goes sideways:

- ☐ She dismisses you: "I hear that. I still needed to say it."
- ☐ You freeze: "I'm trying to say something and I'm not finding the words right now."
- ☐ It escalates: Come back when calmer. Use the Re-Entry script.
- ☐ She uses it against you: Stay at Rung 1. More repair is needed before the higher rungs are safe.

Success Check

- ☐ ☐ You named what you were feeling within a few hours of feeling it
- ☐ ☐ She responded with something that showed she heard you -- a question, a touch, a "yeah, I've noticed that too"

Did your partner seem more or less defensive after you used this script?