

How to Open Up Emotionally When No One Showed You How – Checklist

A quick reference to use before or during the conversation.

Before You Start

- ☐ Pick one rung for tonight: name a feeling, share a feeling, share a need, or share a fear.
- ☐ Say the sentence out loud alone first, in the car or the shower.
- ☐ Pick an ordinary moment, not a fight and not a big sit-down talk.

What To Watch For

- ☐ The urge to wait for the perfect sentence instead of saying a rough one.
- ☐ The urge to apologize for having a feeling before you've even named it.
- ☐ Your mind going blank once you start talking.

What To Say

- ☐ "I feel [word] today, and I'm not totally sure why."
- ☐ "Something's off, and I haven't figured out what yet. Give me tonight."
- ☐ "I feel [word], and what I need is [specific thing]."
- ☐ "I'm scared that if I keep pulling back, I'll lose something that matters to both of us."
- ☐ "I want to keep talking about this, but I just went blank. Can you give me a second?"

What Not To Do

- ☐ Don't open with an apology for having feelings at all.
- ☐ Don't wait days to bring up something you noticed tonight.
- ☐ Don't turn a shared fear into a joke halfway through.
- ☐ Don't try to climb all four rungs in one conversation.

Repair Move

- ☐ If it stalls, say: "I know this is new, you don't have to say anything back right now."

☐ If you freeze, say: "I want to keep talking about this, but I just went blank."

☐ Drop a rung instead of pushing forward if the conversation isn't working. Say: "Let me try that again, smaller."

Success Check

☐ You said one true sentence about a feeling out loud, and the world didn't end.

☐ She asked a follow-up question or leaned in slightly instead of changing the subject.