

Reassurance Scripts for Both Partners

Reassurance goes wrong in two directions at once and each of you can only see one of them. One person asks a question with no answer in it and gets a fact back. The other supplies the fact, accurately and in good faith, watches it fail, and concludes that nothing will ever be enough. Both readings are wrong in the same place. The question was not a request for information, and the answer was not a refusal. This sheet puts the two halves side by side so the mismatch is visible.

Who this is for: One of you asks the same question in slightly different words most weeks, and the other has started answering it in a tone that makes the answer worthless.

The paired scripts

1. "Do you still love me?"

A question with no answer that lands, and why.

Asked: "Do you still love me?"

Given: "Of course I do. I told you last week."

Works: "Come here. Yes. What has happened today?"

My version of the question that asks for contact instead:

2. "Are we okay?"

What a single-word answer costs.

Asked: "Are we okay?"

Given: "Yes. Why do you keep asking?"

Works: "Yes. Sunday is still not sorted and I will come back to it."

What I actually want to hear when I ask this:

What answering it costs me, honestly:

3. When you cannot say the big thing honestly

For the partner who will not produce a sentence they do not mean.

The big sentence I cannot say honestly right now:

The smaller true sentence underneath it:

Works: "I am not going anywhere this week. I want to see you Thursday."

What I usually say instead when I am put on the spot:

4. The reassurance that costs nothing

A time, stated plainly, in one line.

Works: "I am in meetings until four. I will ring you on the way home."

Works: "I cannot talk now. Tonight after eight, and it is not about you."

The next contact, written as a time rather than as soon:

What I would have to change in my week to say that honestly:

5. Why blanket reassurance stops working

The same sentence, worth less each time.

The sentence we have both worn out:

The specific worry hiding under the general question:

Works: "The worry is _____. Here is where I actually am on it."

What we will do instead when the second round starts:

How many rounds we usually go, and who stops it:

6. Asking for it well

For the partner doing the asking, with the shame taken out.

Works: "I am in a bad spot tonight. Can you tell me we are fine?"

Works: "I do not need you to fix it. Sit here for ten minutes."

The test I usually set instead:

What makes asking straight harder than testing:

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