

A WEEKLY EFT RITUAL

THE A.R.E. CHECK-IN

Sue Johnson's three attachment questions, distilled from decades of research on what predicts long-term relationship security. Run weekly, they turn secure connection from a mystery into a rhythm.

THE THREE QUESTIONS

Together they cover the felt experience of secure attachment. Any one that stays "not really" for weeks tells you where the relationship needs attention.

A**ACCESSIBLE**
can I reach you?

Do you turn toward me when I reach for you, or do I have to shout to get through? Accessibility is the baseline signal that says: your inner world is open to me.

R**RESPONSIVE**
will you respond to me?

When I show you what I need, whether that is comfort, celebration, or help, do you meet it? Responsiveness is the felt experience of my needs going somewhere and getting answered.

E**ENGAGED**
do I matter to you?

Are you attentive to me and to us as a specific pair, or am I interchangeable with anyone in this role? Engagement is the ongoing sense that you are choosing this, choosing me.

WHY THESE THREE

Johnson's research shows that couples who consistently experience each other as accessible, responsive, and engaged stay securely bonded, even through significant conflict and life stress. The A.R.E. questions are how you check on the underlying signal without having to wait for a crisis to notice it is thin.

HOW TO RUN THE CHECK-IN

Ten to fifteen minutes, once a week, at a predictable time. Missed weeks are okay; just come back the next week.

1 Sit down together for 10 to 15 minutes

Weekly. Phones down. Not right after a fight, not right before bed. Pick a time that repeats, so the ritual has a shape.

2 Each partner answers the three A.R.E. questions

About this week: Did I feel you were accessible? Responsive? Engaged? A specific week, a specific answer. Not a review of the whole relationship.

3 Give one specific example

"When I was overwhelmed on Wednesday and you sat next to me without trying to fix it, that was you being accessible." "When I texted about the interview and you did not respond for six hours, that felt not responsive." Concrete examples give the feedback something to work with.

4 Receive without defending

The task for the listener is to hear it and take it in, not to correct the record. "I hear that Wednesday felt accessible for you. I did not know that. Thank you." If the feedback was harder: "I did not realize the six hours felt like that. I want to understand more."

5 One request for the coming week

Each partner names one small ask for the week ahead. "Please text me back within an hour or say when you can." "Please put your phone down when I come in the door." Small, specific, doable.

What to do when an answer is "not really." One low answer is not a crisis. Three weeks in a row on the same letter is a signal to slow down and look at what is happening underneath. Often, this is exactly the moment couples therapy can help translate the pattern instead of debating the content.

EDUCATIONAL ONLY, NOT THERAPY.





WEEKLY CHECK-IN

Reflect on the week just ending, then trade sheets or read them aloud together. This is about noticing where you felt connected and where you missed each other, not keeping score on each other. Print one each week; the pattern over time matters more than any single week.

A Accessible: a moment this week I felt I could reach you

WHAT HAPPENED (a moment, a text, a Tuesday night):

R Responsive: a time you responded to what I needed

WHAT HAPPENED:

E Engaged: a moment you felt with me and choosing me

WHAT HAPPENED:

→ **One small ask for the coming week**

KEEP IT SMALL, SPECIFIC, AND DOABLE. ("TEXT me BACK WITHIN an HOUR or say when you can." "PUT your PHONE DOWN when I come in the door.")

WHEN TO BRING IT IN

If the same dimension keeps coming up empty week after week, that is a signal worth bringing to couples therapy instead of trying to grind through it alone. Adapted from Sue Johnson's Hold Me Tight.

