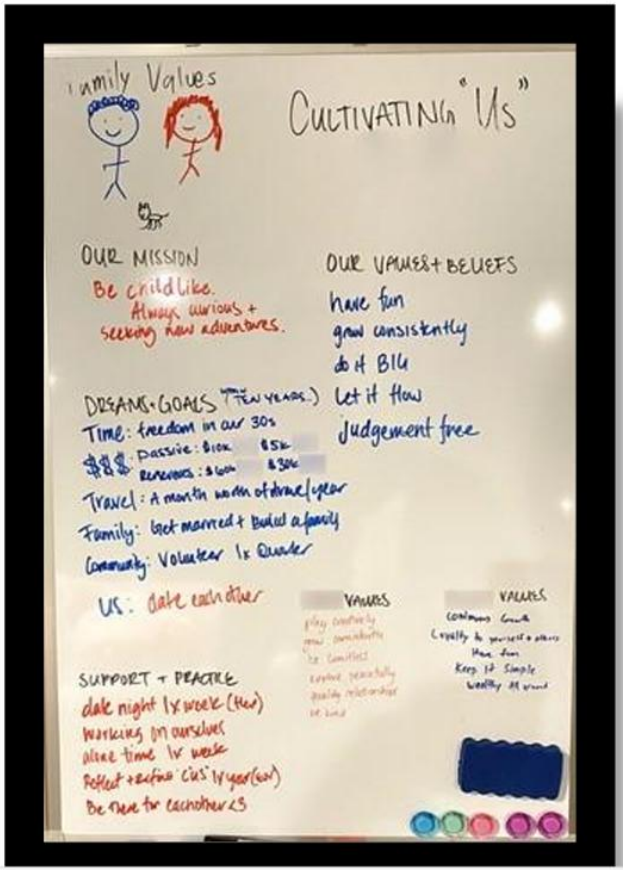
CULTIVATING US

Building, Nourishing & Maintaining Our Relationship



Tracy Henderson Counseling

A Companion to ME | WE | US

THE STARTING POINT: CULTIVATING SOMETHING TOGETHER

Every relationship brings together two individuals with different experiences, values, capabilities, vulnerabilities, needs, and ways of navigating life.

Over time, those individuals create something together.

A relationship develops its own patterns, expectations, responsibilities, routines, traditions, and ways of operating. Some develop intentionally. Others emerge through habit, circumstance, or simply trying to manage the demands of everyday life.

Eventually, we may discover that we're spending more time managing life together than intentionally cultivating the relationship itself.

Cultivating US is an invitation to consider the relationship as something we create, nourish, maintain, and adapt together.

The objective isn't to build a perfect relationship, eliminate every disagreement, or create a long list of rules and obligations.

It's to develop greater awareness of what we want our relationship to represent, what helps it function well, and what each person can contribute to keeping it healthy and sustainable.

Within the **ME | WE | US** framework:

- **ME** represents the individual our identity, experiences, capabilities, vulnerabilities, needs, and responsibilities.
- **WE** represents the interaction how we communicate, understand, influence, support, and respond to one another.
- **US** represents the relationship or shared system we create, maintain, and navigate together.

Explore ME helps us understand what we bring. Understand WE helps us recognize what happens between us. Cultivating US helps us intentionally build and maintain what we share.

US is something both people contribute to, but neither person can maintain entirely alone.

A healthy relationship makes room for ME, encourages effective WE interactions, and invests in the shared system of US.

Use the following areas as opportunities for exploration, reflection, and conversation. You don't need to work through everything at once or follow a particular order.

Begin with what matters most, what feels neglected, or what you'd like to cultivate together.

Approach the process with curiosity, compassion, accountability, and a willingness to practice.

DEFINE OUR RELATIONSHIP MISSION

Purpose, Values, Beliefs & Shared Direction

Relationships develop around more than attraction, compatibility, or shared responsibilities.

They also reflect what we value, how we want to treat one another, what we hope to experience, and what we want to create together.

Yet many relationships operate without explicitly discussing these aspirations.

We may assume we're working toward the same things without ever defining what those things are.

A **Relationship Mission Statement** provides an opportunity to clarify the spirit of the relationship and how we want to show up within it.

It's a commitment, not a contract.

It's a living reference point for intention, accountability, kindness, and growth—not a tool for policing one another.

WHAT TO EXPLORE

Our Shared Values

Identify the values and principles you want your relationship to reflect.

These might include kindness, curiosity, honesty, adventure, respect, play, partnership, affection, independence, generosity, or compassion. Individual values don't need to match perfectly.

The opportunity is to identify which values you want to cultivate within the relationship and how those values might become visible through behavior.

Our Beliefs About Relationships

Explore what each person believes a healthy relationship should look and feel like.

What expectations have you inherited from family, culture, previous relationships, or broader social influences? Which beliefs support the relationship you're trying to build? Which might deserve reconsideration?

Remember that beliefs don't have to remain permanent. You can decide whether to rent, lease, or own the beliefs you've inherited.

Our Relationship Mission

Consider the kind of relationship you want to create. How do you want to treat each other? How do you want to respond when life becomes difficult?

What qualities do you want to remain recognizable in your relationship over time?

A mission doesn't need to be elaborate.

- For example: *We commit to cultivating a relationship grounded in kindness, curiosity, honesty, play, and mutual support. We will practice understanding one another, taking responsibility for our contributions, and making time for what keeps us connected.*

The specific words matter less than whether they represent something meaningful to both people.

Values Become Verbs

A mission becomes useful when we translate intentions into observable behavior.

- If kindness matters, how do we demonstrate kindness during disagreement?
- If curiosity matters, how do we respond when we don't understand?
- If adventure matters, how do we make room for new experiences?
- If partnership matters, how do we share the responsibilities of life?

A relationship mission isn't simply something we believe.

It's something we practice.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What do we want our relationship to represent?
- Which values and principles matter most to the relationship we're building?
- What beliefs or expectations about relationships have we inherited?
- How do we want to show up when things are going well—and when they're difficult?
- What behaviors would demonstrate that we're living our mission?
- How can our mission serve as a neutral reference point rather than a tool for criticism?

THE OPPORTUNITY: Develop a shared sense of purpose that helps guide everyday choices, individual contributions, and how the relationship responds to challenges.

TRANSLATE OUR MISSION INTO PRACTICE

Commitments, Contributions, Accountability & Metrics of Success

A relationship mission provides direction. But direction alone doesn't create change.

- We may genuinely value connection while repeatedly prioritizing other demands.
- We may believe in kindness but struggle to practice it when overwhelmed.
- We may want a collaborative partnership while relying on assumptions about who should do what.

The relationship we want to create depends on what we're willing and able to practice.

Cultivating US involves translating our aspirations into individual and shared contributions that are realistic, observable, and sustainable.

WHAT TO EXPLORE

My Practice | Individual Contributions

Each person brings individual responsibilities into the relationship.

These might include recognizing personal patterns, communicating needs, managing emotional responses, respecting boundaries, following through on commitments, or acknowledging mistakes.

- For example: *I will practice recognizing when I'm becoming defensive and work toward responding with curiosity rather than criticism*.

My Practice asks: **"What can I contribute to support the relationship we're trying to build?"**

This doesn't mean accepting responsibility for everything that happens. It means recognizing the influence and responsibility we each have.

Our Practice | Shared Contributions

Some relationship needs require participation from both people.

These might include making time for connection, communicating about responsibilities, creating opportunities for play, navigating difficult conversations, or responding when the relationship needs attention.

- For example: *We will practice checking in about our capacity and responsibilities before either of us becomes overwhelmed*.

Our Practice asks: **"What can we intentionally contribute to and cultivate together?"**

Shared commitment doesn't require identical contributions. It requires clarity, participation, and appropriate responsibility.

Expectations, Agreements & Follow-Through

Distinguish between what we hope will happen, what we've discussed, and what we've actually agreed to do. Unspoken expectations can create disappointment and resentment. Explicit agreements create opportunities for greater clarity and accountability.

An agreement should be understandable, realistic, mutually considered, and open to revision when circumstances change.

Metrics of Success

Explore how you evaluate the health and progress of your relationship. Are you measuring success by the absence of conflict?

- By how frequently you spend time together?
- By whether responsibilities are completed?
- By how well you repair after difficulties?

- By whether both people feel supported and connected?

Consider metrics that recognize effort, consistency, learning, and meaningful experiences not simply whether everything went according to plan.

Accountability Without Scorekeeping

Accountability involves recognizing commitments, acknowledging impact, following through, and repairing when necessary.

Scorekeeping involves continually comparing contributions, collecting evidence of failure, or using past mistakes to establish superiority.

The objective isn't to eliminate accountability. It's to make accountability constructive rather than adversarial.

A mission can provide a neutral reference point: ***Is this how we said we wanted to show up?***

Rather than: *You're failing at our relationship.*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What individual behaviors would help us better reflect our relationship mission?
- What requires shared effort rather than one person's responsibility?
- Which expectations have we discussed, and which remain assumptions?
- How will we recognize meaningful progress?
- What helps us hold ourselves and each other accountable without creating scorekeeping?
- Where might we benefit from clearer commitments or more realistic expectations?

THE OPPORTUNITY: Turn shared intentions into everyday practices that support accountability, follow-through, and meaningful progress.

NOURISH & RESOURCE OUR RELATIONSHIP

Minimum Dose, Connection, Autonomy, Appreciation & Play

Relationships require resources.

Time, attention, emotional availability, physical affection, shared experiences, practical support, and opportunities for enjoyment all contribute to how a relationship functions.

Yet these resources are often the first things we reduce when life becomes demanding. Work gets busy. Children need attention. Responsibilities accumulate. Energy becomes scarce. Eventually, the relationship may receive whatever remains after everything else has been addressed.

A relationship can become undernourished even when both people care deeply about one another.

Cultivating US involves recognizing what nourishes the relationship and intentionally making room for it.

WHAT TO EXPLORE

Our Minimum Dose

The minimum dose represents the foundational level of nourishment needed to sustain an important part of life. It isn't the least we can get away with. It's what helps something remain healthy and functional.

Within ME | WE | US, we can consider three related needs:

- **ME:** What do I need to remain nourished as an individual?
- **WE:** How do we understand and respond to each other's needs?
- **US:** What does our relationship need regularly to remain nourished?

For US, this might include affection, meaningful conversations, shared activities, intimacy, appreciation, predictability, humor, or time together.

There is no universal minimum dose.

The opportunity is to discover what helps your particular relationship remain connected and sustainable.

Scarcity & Relationship Hunger

When important resources become scarce, we may become more sensitive to what is missing.

- A canceled plan may feel more significant when we haven't spent meaningful time together in weeks.
- A missed expression of affection may carry greater weight when physical connection has been limited.
- A request for togetherness may feel intrusive when someone hasn't had sufficient autonomy.

Sometimes a conflict that appears to be about one small event reflects a larger experience of scarcity.

Consider what the relationship may be missing before assuming the immediate disagreement is the entire problem.

Individual Nourishment & Shared Nourishment

US shouldn't consume all the resources available to ME. Individual friendships, interests, rest, health, solitude, and personal growth remain important. At the same time, individual self-care cannot replace every relational need.

Exercise doesn't substitute for meaningful communication. Independent hobbies don't automatically create shared connection. Healthy interdependence involves making room for both individual and relationship nourishment.

Appreciation, Encouragement & the Penny Jar

Small expressions of appreciation can become easy to overlook.

- A thank-you.
- A kind word.
- An acknowledgment of effort.
- A moment of genuine interest.
- A supportive gesture.

Think of these as pennies in the relationship jar.

Individually, they may seem insignificant. Over time, consistent acknowledgment and encouragement can contribute to the emotional resources of the relationship.

Explore what appreciation looks and feels like for each person, and how to make it part of everyday life.

Play, Novelty & Shared Enjoyment

Relationships can become efficient at managing responsibilities while becoming less intentional about enjoyment.

We may successfully manage schedules, finances, parenting, and household demands while rarely doing things simply because they're fun.

The disease of adulthood is that we forget to PLAY.

Play creates opportunities for spontaneity, laughter, creativity, novelty, and connection. It doesn't always need to be productive. Sometimes the experience itself is the point.

Consider how you can cultivate more enjoyment, curiosity, adventure, and shared experiences within the relationship.

Affection, Intimacy & Connection

Explore the different ways your relationship experiences closeness. This may include conversation, physical affection, emotional intimacy, sexual intimacy, shared activities, companionship, or practical expressions of care.

People may differ in what feels connecting or nourishing. There is no universal formula or required frequency.

The objective is to understand what supports connection while respecting autonomy, consent, capacity, and individual differences.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What helps our relationship feel nourished and connected?
- What tends to disappear first when life becomes demanding?
- Where might scarcity be influencing our reactions or expectations?
- How do we balance individual nourishment with investment in US?
- What forms of appreciation, affection, intimacy, and encouragement matter to us?
- How can we make more room for play, novelty, and enjoyment?

THE OPPORTUNITY: Recognize that relationships require ongoing nourishment, not simply the absence of problems.

DESIGN OUR SHARED SYSTEMS

Responsibilities, Roles, Routines, Transitions & Agreements

Relationships don't operate on good intentions alone. They also depend on the practical systems that support everyday life.

- Schedules need coordinating.
- Responsibilities need managing.
- Decisions need making.
- Transitions need navigating.

And important needs require time, attention, and resources. Without clarity, couples may rely on assumptions, memory, or repeated reminders to keep things functioning.

Sometimes the problem isn't a lack of care or motivation. It's that the system we're using isn't working particularly well.

Cultivating US involves creating structures that support the relationship rather than repeatedly depending on willpower or spontaneous conversations.

WHAT TO EXPLORE

Roles & Responsibilities

Identify the responsibilities required to maintain your shared life.

These may include household tasks, finances, parenting, scheduling, planning, emotional labor, caregiving, and other practical demands.

Explore who currently manages these responsibilities and whether the arrangement is understood, workable, and sustainable.

Fairness doesn't always mean identical contributions.

It does require recognizing the actual demands, available capacity, and agreements that shape the shared system.

Make the Invisible Visible

Some contributions are easy to recognize. Others happen behind the scenes.

- Remembering appointments.
- Anticipating needs.
- Tracking supplies.
- Planning family activities.
- Managing schedules.

Noticing what needs attention before someone else asks. These invisible responsibilities can create strain when they're overlooked or assumed. We can't read the label from the inside out.

If we want others to understand what we're carrying, we may need to make that work visible. The objective isn't to prove who does more.

It's to create greater understanding and clarity about what the shared system requires.

Shared Standards & Self-Achievement Activities

People often have different preferences for how responsibilities should be completed. One person may consider a task finished. Another may believe additional steps are necessary.

Explore the difference between:

- **Our shared baseline:** The level of effort or completeness we've mutually agreed is sufficient.
- **My self-achievement activity:** Additional effort I choose because it satisfies my personal preferences or standards.

Additional effort can be valuable and meaningful. However, personal standards beyond the shared baseline don't automatically become another person's obligation.

This distinction can reduce unnecessary conflict while preserving individual preferences.

Transitions & Daily Rhythms

Relationships involve frequent transitions. Waking up. Leaving for work. Returning home. Moving from parenting to couple time. Shifting from activity to rest. Preparing for sleep.

Each person may need different amounts of time, space, predictability, or support during these transitions.

Explore whether simple routines can help make these moments smoother.

Structure, Process & Forcing Functions

Good intentions don't always translate into consistent action. Sometimes structure helps.

- A shared calendar.
- A recurring conversation.
- A predictable transition routine.
- A designated time for planning.
- A reminder or agreed process.

These forcing functions can support follow-through without relying entirely on memory or motivation. The objective isn't to make the relationship rigid.

It's to reduce unnecessary friction and create more room for connection.

Communication Guardrails & Shared Agreements

Difficult conversations may benefit from agreed conditions. When should we discuss important topics? How do we recognize when we're becoming overwhelmed?

What happens when someone needs a pause? How do we return to unfinished conversations?

The detailed communication skills belong in Understand WE.

Here, the opportunity is to establish shared practices that help those skills become sustainable.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What responsibilities and invisible work are required to maintain our shared life?
- Are our roles and expectations clear, realistic, and mutually understood?
- Where do differing personal standards create unnecessary conflict?
- What transitions or routines repeatedly create stress?
- Which structures or processes could reduce friction and support follow-through?
- What agreements would help us navigate recurring challenges more effectively?

THE OPPORTUNITY: Build shared systems that support the relationship rather than repeatedly relying on assumptions, reminders, or crisis-driven problem-solving.

MAINTAIN, REPAIR & ADAPT

Check-Ins, Pressure Tests, Accountability & Changing Capacity

Relationships aren't static. The people within them change. Life circumstances evolve. Responsibilities increase or decrease. Needs shift.

And the systems that worked during one stage of life may no longer work during another. Cultivating US requires more than creating a mission or establishing agreements.

It involves periodically asking whether the relationship we're building still fits the lives we're living.

Maintenance isn't evidence that something is wrong. It's part of keeping something important working well.

WHAT TO EXPLORE

Relationship Maintenance

Consider how you regularly attend to the relationship. Some couples benefit from brief daily moments of connection. Others find value in weekly conversations about schedules, responsibilities, capacity, and opportunities for shared time.

Periodic conversations may help revisit larger goals, values, or agreements. There is no required schedule.

The opportunity is to create a rhythm that helps you notice what the relationship needs before problems become more difficult to manage.

System Check-Ins

Explore what's working, what feels strained, and what may need attention.

Consider questions such as:

- What's going well?
- What feels undernourished?
- What demands are affecting our capacity?
- What responsibilities or expectations need clarification?
- What might we want to practice differently?

A check-in isn't intended to become a recurring performance evaluation.

It's an opportunity to understand the current condition of the relationship and make adjustments.

Pressure Tests & Life Transitions

Life creates pressure tests.

- Job changes.
- Parenting demands.
- Health challenges.
- Financial stress.
- Grief and loss.
- Family transitions.
- Aging.
- Unexpected circumstances.

These experiences may expose vulnerabilities in a system that previously worked well.

Instead of assuming someone has failed, consider whether the demands have changed and whether the relationship needs to adapt.

Capacity & Mutual Deficiency

Sometimes both people are operating near or beyond their available capacity.

- Both may need support.
- Both may feel unsupported.
- Both may have limited resources to offer.

This can create a condition of mutual deficiency where the relationship struggles because neither person has much available.

Recognizing this possibility can help shift the conversation toward realistic expectations, outside resources, and sustainable adjustments.

It doesn't excuse harmful behavior or eliminate individual accountability.

It helps clarify whether the current system is asking more than the people within it can reasonably provide.

Repairing the Interaction vs. Repairing the System

Sometimes an interaction goes poorly. Someone becomes defensive. A concern is dismissed. An agreement is broken. WE involves understanding the interaction, acknowledging impact, and practicing repair.

US asks an additional question: **"What conditions or processes might need to change so this problem becomes less likely to repeat?"**

- For example, a couple may repair an argument about household responsibilities.

But if the responsibilities remain unclear, the same conflict may return. Repairing the system might involve clarifying ownership, adjusting expectations, or creating a better process.

Both forms of repair matter.

Do-Overs, Grace & Accountability

Mistakes are inevitable.

There will be moments when we forget, react poorly, miss an opportunity, or fall short of our intentions. A do-over provides an opportunity to recognize what happened and try something different.

Grace doesn't mean ignoring repeated harm. Accountability doesn't require perfection.

Healthy maintenance involves making room for learning while taking responsibility for meaningful change.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How do we currently recognize when the relationship needs attention?
- What maintenance practices help us stay connected and coordinated?
- Which life changes or pressure tests have challenged our existing system?
- Where might our expectations exceed our current capacity?
- Are we repeatedly repairing the same interaction without addressing the underlying conditions?
- How can we practice accountability, grace, and meaningful do-overs?

THE OPPORTUNITY: Treat the relationship as a living system that requires attention, adjustment, and occasional redesign as life changes.

CULTIVATE OUR SHARED FUTURE

Dreams, Goals, Traditions, Novelty & Growth

Relationships are influenced by the past and maintained in the present. But they also benefit from having something to look forward to. Shared aspirations can provide direction, meaning, excitement, and opportunities to grow together.

Without intention, relationships may become organized primarily around immediate responsibilities. We focus on what needs to be done today.

- What needs to be paid.
- What needs to be scheduled.
- What needs to be managed.

And gradually, we may spend less time considering what we'd like to experience, discover, or create together.

Cultivating US involves making room for a shared future not simply managing the present.

WHAT TO EXPLORE

Our Dreams & Aspirations

Explore what each person hopes to experience or accomplish.

These may involve travel, family, career, financial stability, community, creativity, learning, adventure, or other meaningful pursuits.

Not every aspiration needs to be shared.

The opportunity is to understand which dreams belong to ME, which require support through WE, and which you want to cultivate as US.

Shared Goals & Direction

Consider what you're working toward together. Some goals may be practical. Others may be experiential or relational. The objective isn't to create an endless list of achievements.

It's to identify meaningful directions that reflect your shared values and priorities.

Traditions & Rituals

Relationships develop meaning through repeated experiences.

- Shared meals.
- Holiday traditions.
- Annual trips.
- Favorite activities.
- Small routines.
- Personal celebrations.

These experiences can create continuity and a sense of shared identity.

Explore which traditions are meaningful, which have become obligations, and what new experiences you might want to create.

Novelty, Adventure & Discovery

Familiarity can provide comfort and stability. But relationships may also benefit from new experiences.

- Trying something unfamiliar.
- Learning together.
- Exploring a new place.
- Taking on a challenge.

Rediscovering an activity you once enjoyed. Novelty doesn't require elaborate plans or expensive experiences.

Sometimes it simply means stepping outside familiar routines and creating opportunities for curiosity.

Supporting Individual Growth

A shared future doesn't require both people to pursue identical goals. One person may want to develop a new skill. Another may be navigating a career change. One may want greater independence. Another may be exploring new interests.

Healthy relationships make room for individual development while considering how those changes influence the shared system.

Revisiting Our Mission

As people and circumstances change, the relationship mission may also evolve. What mattered most five years ago may not be the same today. Revisiting the mission doesn't necessarily mean the original vision failed.

It may mean the relationship is adapting to a new stage of life.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What are we looking forward to creating or experiencing together?
- Which shared goals reflect our current values and priorities?
- What traditions or rituals contribute to our sense of US?
- Where could we introduce more novelty, adventure, or shared enjoyment?
- How do we support each other's individual growth while maintaining our connection?
- Does our current relationship mission still reflect the relationship we want to cultivate?

THE OPPORTUNITY: Keep the relationship oriented toward shared meaning, discovery, and growth rather than allowing everyday responsibilities to define its entire purpose.

CONNECTING ME TO WE & US

From Individual Awareness to Shared Practice

ME | WE | US provides three perspectives for understanding and supporting a relationship.

- **ME | WHAT DO I BRING?**
  - My experiences, values, emotions, needs, capabilities, vulnerabilities, patterns, and responsibilities.
  - What can I understand, manage, communicate, or cultivate?

- **WE | WHAT HAPPENS BETWEEN US?**
  - How do we communicate, understand, influence, support, and respond to one another?
  - What happens when our experiences, needs, or preferences differ?

- **US | WHAT ARE WE BUILDING TOGETHER?**
  - What mission, agreements, responsibilities, routines, resources, rituals, and shared experiences support the relationship?
  - How do we intentionally nourish, maintain, and adapt the system?

AN EXAMPLE: SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

ME = "I recognize that I prefer a highly organized home and often feel anxious when things are unfinished."

WE = "We explore our different standards and recognize that my partner doesn't experience the same level of discomfort around unfinished tasks."

US = "We establish a shared baseline for household responsibilities, clarify ownership, and recognize that additional effort beyond our agreement may be a personal self-achievement activity."

The individual insight creates an opportunity for mutual understanding.

The mutual understanding creates an opportunity to establish a workable shared system.

AN EXAMPLE: STAYING CONNECTED

- **ME** = "I recognize that when life becomes busy, I tend to withdraw into work and responsibilities."
- **WE** = "We discuss how my withdrawal affects our connection and what helps each of us feel supported."
- **US** = "We identify a realistic minimum dose of connection and establish practices that help us maintain it."

ME helps us understand ourselves. WE helps us understand the interaction. US helps us intentionally cultivate the relationship.

BUILDING OUR RELATIONSHIP BLUEPRINT

Turning Our Intentions Into a Living Practice

A Relationship Blueprint brings together the important discoveries we've made through ME, WE, and US. It doesn't need to be formal, elaborate, or permanent. It can be a shared note, a journal entry, a whiteboard, a framed statement, or another format that feels meaningful.

The objective is to create something visible and useful a reference point that helps translate intentions into practice.

Consider five components.

1 | OUR MISSION

How do we want our relationship to feel, function, and show up? What qualities do we want to cultivate?

- *Example: We commit to cultivating a relationship grounded in kindness, curiosity, partnership, play, and mutual support.*

2 | OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Which values matter most to us, and what behaviors demonstrate those values?

- *Example: We practice curiosity by asking questions before assuming intentions. We practice partnership by making responsibilities visible and discussing what each of us can reasonably contribute.*

3 | OUR COMMITMENTS

What will each of us practice individually? What will we contribute to together?

- *Example: My Practice - I will communicate when I'm overwhelmed rather than automatically withdrawing.*

- *Example: Our Practice - We will make time to discuss concerns before they become recurring frustrations.*

4 | OUR MINIMUM DOSE

What does our relationship need regularly to remain nourished? What do we want to protect when life becomes demanding?

- *Example: We will prioritize meaningful connection, appreciation, affection, individual autonomy, and opportunities for shared enjoyment.*

5 | OUR MAINTENANCE

How will we recognize when something isn't working? How will we revisit agreements, acknowledge progress, and make adjustments?

- *Example: We will periodically check in about what's working, what feels strained, and what might need to change.*

Your blueprint isn't a contract designed to catch someone doing something wrong.

It's a living reference point for the relationship you're trying to cultivate.

Post it. Revisit it. Practice it. Update it.

Allow it to evolve as you do.

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

Finding Our Focus

You don't need to redesign your entire relationship.

Sometimes one small, intentional change can create meaningful opportunities.

Consider:

- **What are we already doing well?** Which behaviors, practices, and experiences help our relationship function?
- **What feels undernourished?** Are we missing connection, play, affection, autonomy, appreciation, or shared time?
- **What keeps creating friction?** Are there responsibilities, expectations, routines, or agreements that need attention?
- **What has changed?** Are our current systems still appropriate for our capacity and circumstances?
- **What would we like to cultivate?** What shared experience, quality, or practice would make the relationship more meaningful?

Choose one or two areas to explore. Start with something realistic. Notice what happens. Review the game tape. Adjust as needed.

And build repetitions.

The goal isn't to get everything right immediately.

It's to create a relationship in which both people are willing and able to participate in its ongoing development.

A FINAL THOUGHT

A healthy relationship isn't something we create once and then leave to operate on its own. It develops through the choices, contributions, interactions, and experiences of the people within it.

Sometimes the work involves understanding ourselves. Sometimes it involves learning to communicate and respond differently. And sometimes it involves stepping back and reconsidering how the shared system operates.

- What do we want our relationship to represent?
- What helps us remain nourished?
- What practices support our connection?
- What needs to change as life changes?

These questions don't have permanent answers. They invite us to remain curious, intentional, and engaged. We won't always have the same capacity. We won't always agree.

And we won't always practice our intentions perfectly.

But we can continue to learn, adjust, repair, and create opportunities for something meaningful.

US isn't simply what happens when two people are together. It's what we intentionally cultivate through how we show up, what we practice, and what we choose to maintain.