

COUPLE'S RECOVERY WEEKLY CHECK-IN

# Partners & Couples Sexual Addiction Recovery Packet



Susan Zola, LCSW, CCPS, CSAT

# Recovering Couple's Weekly Check-In Rules and Contract

The couple's weekly check-in is an important part of the trust rebuilding process in recovery. Many clients share feeling tangled up in challenging communication patterns where criticism, control, anger, isolation, silence, defensiveness, and resentment are the default. It is not unusual for couples to be emotionally triggered by each other during recovery - feeling lost in their healing process. Couples may feel uncertain about what and how much to communicate, and may lack the tools to interact in healthy ways when discussing their progress in therapy, as well as their triggers and challenges.

There is usually an imbalance where the betrayed partner feels like they must be the "mean mommy" or "intimidating dad." Though they often resent this role, they may be apprehensive in changing this dynamic due to fear of further betrayal. On the other side, the recovery addict, often the "parented partner" feels anger and resentment.

Some partners express feeling as if their spouse is a project rather than a partner. Still others share feeling as if they must walk on eggshells in order to maintain the communication power status quo – an unhealthy normal that often develops over years as one person undercompensates, and the other person overcompensates. These roles are first learned in the family of origin and can be acted out over decades in a marriage or relationship.

This kind of communication/relational imbalance is intense, volatile and typically disastrous. It can lead to emotional withdrawal through anger, secret keeping, shame and fear. And it can impede progress in healing. Clients in recovery, both the addict and the partner, share that they have experienced a great deal of intensity in their communication, but very little intimacy.

The following scripted weekly check-in is an excellent tool to assist couples with practicing a new normal in order to create a language of healing. However, this requires that both people are willing to commit to the process with respect, integrity, openness and consistency. It may feel vulnerable or awkward at the start, but learning these new steps is an important part of building trust

# Part I: Weekly Check-in Rules

1. The person who is in recovery for SA will initiate a conversation to discuss with their spouse or partner the best day and time to set up regular weekly recovery check-ins. Once decided, unless there is an emergency, this time is sacred for your check in.

DAY of the WEEK \_\_\_\_\_ TIME \_\_\_\_\_

Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_

2. The SA client will initiate the weekly recovery check-in. He/She will be responsible for keeping track of the weekly check-in, and reminding their partner/spouse that check-in is, "Tomorrow at 11 AM", or "Sunday at 6 PM" etc. The reminder is delivered in a kind way to support healing. It is not up to the recovering partner to initiate the check-in as many partners already struggle with being in a parenting or policing role to the addicted partner. Though this is very challenging for many recovering addicts, by taking the lead, the SA client can begin to demonstrate ownership, leadership, responsibility, transparency, accountability, as well as practicing consistency, predictability and honesty.

3. Each person agrees to work on his or her parts of their worksheet before the check-in. The following worksheets will help you follow a script until you are feeling safer, and more connected and grounded in the check-ins. Parts of the worksheet will be completed before the check-in, and the rest in "real time" during the couples check-in.

4. Both people agree to use this time respectfully to support the relationship. Check-ins are not about hoarding up hurts and then hurling those hurts against the other person at the end of the week.

5. Keep your check-in on point. Do not roll out a list of old wounds and unresolved issues from the past. "He said/She said" is not a healthy part of a check-in. This is best saved for your couple's therapy session. If one of you finds yourself escalating, take a time-out and reschedule the check-in.

6. Do not use each other's therapists, clinical work, and feedback from individual sessions as leverage and/or a way to shame or control each other. Saying things like, "My therapist said you should not be..." or, "My therapist said that you should have done this already..." is unhealthy and manipulative. It serves to undermine the counseling relationship.

# Part I: Weekly Check-in Rules

7. Both the SA and the spouse/partner are willing to practice non-blaming, shaming, accusatory, abusive, interruptive, or interrogating – no one is to be put on the witness stand. Leave “should haves”, and “why didn’t you” out of the check-in process. No yelling, mocking, threats of abandonment, eye rolling, or profanity. Stay respectful and stay present. If you find yourself becoming activated, angry or elevated emotionally, take a time-out, wait 60 minutes, and try again. If you are unable to complete the check-in, then bring this to your couple’s therapist for support.

8. Stick to the script, and keep the check-in at about 20-30 minutes, 10-15 min for each. Do not go over 30 minutes. Do not monopolize each other’s time. The non-dominant partner will want to find his or her voice. The dominant partner will want to practice active listening.

9. The partner may decide what he/she chooses to hear in the check-in. Please discuss what is helpful and non-helpful with your couple’s therapist. For example, not every single detail or trigger may be helpful for the partner to hear as this can be discussed within the sex addict’s therapy session, recovery group, or 12-step meeting or with his or her sponsor. Talk with your therapist about what the boundaries are for your check-in.

10. If there is a slip or relapse then this is best discussed within a therapy session. Again, discuss with your therapist a plan of action if this happens (e.g. If I slip I will contact my therapist and group and ask for a session within 72 hours to discuss this). If the partner wishes to know about a slip within 24 hours put together a plan on how this will be handled.

As always, **SAFETY** first! If you feel at risk for harming yourself or your spouse/partner, then end the check in, call 911 and your crisis support. **Do not facilitate a check in with children present.**

*I am willing to honor the rules of the couple’s check-in process:*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Part II: Recovery Check-In Script

**SA starts: (5 min. max, respect your spouse or partner's boundaries):**

My success that I am most proud of in supporting my recovery and healing this week is:

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about this success.

My challenge that I experienced with my recovery this week has been:

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about this challenge.

The tools that I used for my challenges are:

The one thing I can do to support my recovery in the week ahead is:

**Partner's Response: (Take a few moments to consider your response - 5 min. max)**

I hear that you feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about your success.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ when I hear about this success.

I understand that you feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about your challenge.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ when I hear about this challenge.

One thing I can do moving forward in response to this information in supporting you and our relationship is:

# Part II: Recovery Check-In Script

**SA Affirmation to partner:** “Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_ in my recovery.

**Partner goes second: (5 min. max)**

My success that I am most proud of in supporting my healing this week is:

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about this success.

My challenge that I experienced with my healing this week has been:

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about this challenge.

The tools that I used for my challenges are:

The one thing I can do to support my healing in the week ahead is:

**SA Response: (take a few moments to consider your response 5 min. max)**

I hear that you feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about your success.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ when I hear about this success.

I understand that you feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about your challenge.

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ when I hear about this challenge.

One thing I can do moving forward in response to this information in supporting you and our relationship is:

**Partner Affirmation to SA:** “Thank you for \_\_\_\_\_ in my healing.

# Part III: Relationship Check-In Script

## SA Starts: (5 min. max)

This week I have felt the most proud about myself and our relationship in the following way:

This week I have felt the most supported and appreciated by you in our relationship in the following way:

This week I have felt misunderstood and \_\_\_\_\_ about the following situation (keep this to 1-3 sentences, be respectful and clear, use I statements):

This week I feel that I have not heard or understood you in the following way:

What I need moving forward to feel best supported in this relationship over the next week is:

What I am willing to contribute to support our relationship moving forward over the next week is:

## Partner's Response: (5 min. max)

Thank you for sharing your positive actions and feelings about our relationship and your wants and needs. Thank you for taking ownership of your challenges; this allows me to feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

I hear that what you need from me is \_\_\_\_\_. I am willing to try to be more aware and work on this. I also hear that you are willing to contribute support by \_\_\_\_\_.

# Part III: Relationship Check-In Script



**Partner goes next: (5 min. max)**

This week I have felt most proud about myself and our relationship in the following way:

This week I have felt most supported and appreciated by you in our relationship in the following way:

This week I have felt misunderstood and \_\_\_\_\_ about the following situation (keep this to 1-3 sentences):

This week I feel that I have not heard or understood you in the following way:

What I need moving forward to feel best supported in this relationship over the next week is:

What I am willing to contribute to support our relationship moving forward over the next week is:

**SAs Response: (5 min. max)**

Thank you for sharing your feelings about our relationship and your wants and needs. Thank you for taking ownership of your challenges; this allows me to feel \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. I hear that you need from me \_\_\_\_\_. I am willing to try to be more aware and work on this.

## Part IV: Conclusion

Each person keeps their weekly sheets in their recovery notebooks to reflect on over the week ahead, and as a motivational tool for improving interactions with the other. Practice meeting your own individual needs while endeavoring to meet a need [**a need**, not all needs] of your spouse or partner.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---