

10 Relationship Agreements for a Drama Free Life

1. We Don't Threaten the Relationship

Safety

- "I'm not going to mention the possibility of divorce until we've thoroughly attempted resolution of our issues."
- "Sex has been dissatisfying to me lately and I'd like your help with that."
- "I want us to collaborate on specific relationship issues together."

Threat

- "I'm willing to threaten divorce to motivate you to make changes."
- "If sex doesn't get better I'm going to end this."
- "I'd rather complain about general relationship dissatisfaction rather than resolve specific issues."

2. We Protect Each Other from Criticism, Judgement, and Shame

Protection

- "Let me take a break to calm down so I don't lash out at you."
- "I'm sorry for criticizing you in front of our friends."
- "Hey mom, please don't speak that way to my wife."

Injury

- "When I'm upset I'll express myself however I want!"
- "Too bad if I embarrass you in front of our friends"
- "My mom's a pain, good luck with that."

3. We Make Quick Repair to Tension Between Us

Recovery

- "I feel some distance between us, how about we recover before we watch the movie?"
- "I'm sorry I was short with you, I've just had a hard day with the kids."
- "I don't like working through our fights, but I do it because it's relieving for both of us."

Decline

- "I feel some distance between us, but talking about it just makes it worse."
- "I don't need to explain to you why I've been short all day."
- "I don't like working through our fights, I'm going to leave the house for the rest of the day."

4. We Commit to Learning Why Our Partner Feels, Thinks, and Acts the Ways They Do

Reality

- "When you were a child, how did your parents react to your anger?"
- "What's it like for you when we go to my parent's for dinner?"
- "Whenever you get anxious during one of our fights, what can I do to relieve you?"

Projection

- "I know all about your anger, and don't need to know more."
- "It's so inconvenient when you get stressed around my parents."
- "It's not my job to manage your anxiety during fights, I'm going to raise my voice regardless."

5. What We Decide in the Relationship Is Good for Both of Us

Collaboration

- "How would it be for you to move to away from your parents?"
- "If baptizing our son is that disturbing to you, I'm willing to let go of the idea."
- "Let's visit Chicago this year, where I love, and we'll visit Hawaii next year, where you love."

Competition

- "I really need to get away from your parents, you'll get over it eventually."
- "Baptism is a necessary spiritual rite and your feelings about it are irrelevant."
- "Because I do all the planning for vacations, I should be able to decide where we go."

6. We Advocate for Our Own Emotional Needs

Self-Advocacy

- "I'm not feeling well and could use some support."
- "I don't know why I'm sad, but I am, and I want to tell you about it."
- "I'm sorry I rolled my eyes and scoffed, I'll make sure to not get so hangry next time."

Victimhood

- "You should know what I'm feeling without me having to tell you."
- "I'm fine, how are you?"
- "When I roll my eyes and scoff, it's your job to do something about that."

7. We Tell Each Other Everything

Clarity

- "Memories of high school are hard to talk about, but I want you to know why it was so painful to me."
- "I'm still feeling heavy about our argument last night."
- "One of my dreams is to have a cabin in the mountains, I'd love that."

Obscurity

- "Memories of high school are too hard to talk about, I'd rather not revisit the past with you."
- "I'm over last night (but not being honest) so there's nothing to talk about."
- "My dreams are impractical so what's the point of talking about them?"

8. We Cherish Our Love Daily Through Expressions of Appreciation, Admiration, and Gratitude

Intimacy

- "Have a good day at work my love!"
- "Thank you for emptying the dishwasher. What would I do without you?"
- "Last night was the best. I dig it when you initiate sex during the week."

Isolation

- (Lacking expression of admiration).
- (Lacking expression of gratitude).
- (Lacking expression of appreciation).

9. We Turn Towards Bids for Attention Graciously

Closeness

- "I'll give you a call back as soon as I get a break from these emails."
- "I suck at bike riding but I'll practice if you want to go on more rides together."
- "I know you love to snuggle, come over here!"

Distance

- "I don't like to have to respond to you during the work day."
- "I suck at bike riding so don't ask me to join you."
- "Oh god, you're so needy with your constant cuddling."

10. We Create Routine and Ritual That Spotlight Our Relationship

Activity

- "When we get home from work let's hug and a kiss no matter what else is happening."
- "Let's plan a picnic and hike this weekend."
- "I like texting you goodnight even when we're in different time zones."

Stagnation

- "When I get home I'm often tired and grumpy and may not always greet you."
- "I don't want to have plan the weekend so far in advance."
- "When I go to bed I don't want to always have to say goodnight."