

“Off-Road” Check-In’s! (Recovery Script for Couples During Changing Times)

A/O partner:

1. Today I’ve been feeling (e.g., sad, anxious, ashamed, happy):
2. Some challenges I encountered were (triggers):
3. Coping skills I’ve been using: (How did I ground myself? What would ground me now?)
4. One thing I have learned about my addiction or myself is:
5. I’m grateful for:

B/T Partner:

1. Today I’ve been feeling:
2. Some challenges I’ve encountered were (triggers):
3. Self-care or coping I’ve been utilizing:
4. One way that you could help me would be to:

(A/O- Acting Out, Addict Offender. B/T- Betrayal Trauma, Beginning to Trust)

Modifications with Stressful Situations for all couples (COVID-19 etc):

This week I’ve been grounding (securing/remembering/focusing/resetting) myself in

I am grateful for....

I am fearful about....

I need courage to....

I’m not doing well in...

Can you do _____ to help me feel connected to you and us?

Additional Info for check in's if needed

Except for sobriety date, addict and partner may both check in regarding the following:

1. Sobriety date from inner circle behaviors (this should be the first item on any couples' recovery check-in).
2. Feelings: How I'm feeling now (anger, pain, guilt, love, joy, shame, fear, passion).
3. Recovery activities since last check-in (12-step meetings, group therapy, individual and/or couples' therapy, reading, homework, step-work).
4. Optional: Triggers addict experienced and tools used to deal with triggers. For example, "This week I was triggered several times and when that happened, I said the serenity prayer/ called a program person, sponsor/redirected my attention (or whatever tool was used)." Emphasis is on tools used rather than details of triggers. For example, if addict was triggered by a particular person the focus is on the tools used to deal with the trigger rather than what the person looked like, what they were wearing, etc. Addict may rate the intensity of the trigger on a scale of 1-10, 10 being the highest.

Check-In Dos & Don'ts:

- Addict should take responsibility to initiate check-ins.
- DO make sobriety date the first item on any recovery check-in. Partners are often anxious waiting to hear this information and may miss other details as they are waiting to hear the sobriety date. •
- DO schedule regular check-ins with a specific start and end time; for example, every Sunday night from 6:00 – 6:20 pm or every Tuesday morning from 7:00 – 7:20 am.
- DON'T share middle circle behaviors (specifically objectification, euphoric recall, fantasy, etc.) unless they have significantly impacted the addict's recovery that week or have interfered with the couples' communication or connection.
- DO (for the addict) make an effort to minimize defensiveness if your partner asks questions about your check-in or needs more information.
- DO (for the partner) listen to the check-in without interrupting and thank the addict when complete.
- DO (for the partner) mindfully consider the questions you want to ask the addict regarding his/ her triggers and middle circle behavior. This information (especially if it relates only to thoughts and/or fantasies) is more harmful than helpful to the partner and the couple.

FANOS: Couples Sharing Exercise

FANOS couples sharing exercise is an acronym derived from a Greek word meaning “to shed light on” or “to bring to light.” It provides a way for a couples to connect emotionally and to build intimacy (intimacy = “into me you see” and you accept me anyways).

Each letter of the acronym represents a subject you will talk about together:

Feelings: Share with your partner a feeling you have. (You may use a list of feelings if it could help you identify feelings).

Affirmations: Affirm your partner for something she has done.

Needs: State a need you have today (not necessarily one that must be met by your partner).

Ownership: Take responsibility and apologize for something you have said or done.

Struggles/Sobriety: Here you have an opportunity to tell your partner the status of your struggles/sexual sobriety/recovery today (sobriety date, general struggles, recovery work, etc.). Be specific but not graphic.

Your partner also has the opportunity to check in regarding something she struggles with and works on (sobriety from overeating, raging, criticizing, obsessing about, checking on you, withdrawing, etc.).

One of you will begin the check-in and run through the entire FANOS; then the other will do the same. Talking through the entire FANOS should take no longer than a few minutes, but it gives you both a opportunity to share what you are thinking, feeling, and doing on your journey toward healing.

When you share your FANOS, it is important that the other person provide a safe environment. Their role is simply to listen, not really give feedback.

When sharing your FANOS, it is important to maintain eye contact with the person with whom you are sharing it. Eye contact may feel uncomfortable at first, but will eventually become comfortable. This is part of the benefit of this exercise. If you do the exercise with your wife or partner, remember not to give feedback. Do not criticize, correct, or shame one another. Simply listen to each other and know that the goal of this exercise is to build intimacy into the relationship. Also agree not to talk about the FANOS for 48 hours after it has been shared. The key is to create safety in the sharing time.

Here is an example of FANOS from a partner:

Feelings: I’m a little scared but hopeful. I often feel fear thinking about whether you are taking recovery seriously. I’m worried that you will one day betray me again.

Affirmations: I want to acknowledge and thank you for doing the dishes today.

Needs: I need recognition from my boss that I helped solve a problem for the company last week. I took a big risk to be honest and report some inappropriate conduct, and I recognize I want to be thanked.

Ownership: I take ownership over my financial issues with spending. I recognize that you desire to save for our future and that my spending has often harmed us financially. I am sorry and I am trying to work on balance.

Struggles/Sobriety: I’ve practiced healthy eating habits all day. While I have occasional periods of desiring unhealthy foods, I’m making progress in being more honest about how I’ve used food to cope with my feelings.

(Taken from “Shattered Vows” by Debra Laaser, ps. 184-186)