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FIELD GUIDE / PHONE CONVERSATION

The One-Page Version

Many couples who argue about a phone believe they are arguing about privacy, but phone checking is rarely about gathering information, and far more often it is a way of managing anxiety. Underneath most checking is a question the frightened partner cannot say out loud, which is “Are we okay?”, and underneath the silence on the other side is one just as hard to say, which is “Do you believe me?” Think of an electric burner that has just been switched off. It looks black, and black is supposed to mean safe, but anyone who has been burned once has learned that black tells you nothing, so they stop touching the stove at all. An old hurt works the same way on a nervous system, which does not tell time. Since a phone can only ever say that nothing was found, the answer has to come from a partner, and the body learns to believe it the way it learns a stove is cool, by asking out loud, hearing a plain answer, and finding that nothing bad happened.

Three ways the conversation can begin:

- 01 | If you are the one who checks: “I don’t want your phone. I want to hear from you that we’re okay.”
- 02 | If you are the one being asked: “I’d rather you ask me than search in secret, and I’ll answer anything you ask.”
- 03 | Together, out loud: “If I get scared, I come to you first. If you come to me, I answer without a trial.”

This page is the short version of *The Phone Conversation Script*. The full Field Guide adds every script, the worksheet and a one-page cheat sheet.

couples-conversations.com/fg-phone-conversation

One important note: This program is not in place of therapy or clinical treatment or diagnosis, but for education. Many relationships struggle with various issues; this is normal. However, they should always feel safe. If there are any mental health concerns, or concerns for safety, or if the relationship feels dangerous in any way, please seek professional support rather than continuing in this program. When in doubt, it is best to consult with a proper therapist.