

Spread Love & Acceptance

*Understanding yourself and
the people you share a life with*



For two or more · Short version

Part Two: sharing a home, work or care with the people around you.

by Christian

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FOR TWO OR MORE • SHORT VERSION

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Spread Love & Acceptance
spreadloveandacceptance.com

Spread Love & Acceptance: For two or more, the short version.
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Not therapy. This book is general education about people and relationships. It is not a diagnosis, treatment or a replacement for help from a doctor, counsellor or other trained professional, and it can’t know your situation.

If you are not safe. If you feel afraid of someone you live with, or someone controls your money, phone or movements, that is not a problem to fix with a worksheet. spreadloveandacceptance.com/safety lists free, private help. If you are in danger now, call your local emergency number.

The examples are made up. The people in the scenes and examples are invented, built from common patterns. None of them is a real person or a testimonial.

Research mentioned in the chapters is listed, with links, in the research notes at the back and at spreadloveandacceptance.com/research.

Set in Lora, Fraunces and IBM Plex Mono.

If you need help now

If you might act on thoughts of ending your life, or someone is in danger right now, call your local emergency number: 999 in the UK, 112 or 999 in Ireland, 911 in the US and Canada, 000 in Australia, 111 in New Zealand.

If you are struggling, or worried about someone else, you can talk to a trained person now. These lines are free, private and open day and night. You don't have to be sure it is a crisis to call or text.

WHERE YOU ARE	CALL OR TEXT
United States	Call or text 988 (the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), or chat at 988lifeline.org. You can also text HOME to 741741 (Crisis Text Line).
United Kingdom	Call Samaritans free on 116 123 . Or text SHOUT to 85258 (Shout, a free text line).
Ireland	Call Samaritans free on 116 123 .
Canada	Call or text 9-8-8 (the Suicide Crisis Helpline), in English or French.
Australia	Call Lifeline on 13 11 14 , or text 0477 13 11 14.
New Zealand	Call or text 1737 (Need to talk?).
Anywhere else	findahelpline.com lists free helplines in many countries, by phone, text and chat.

For children and young people

UK	Childline, 0800 1111 (free, for anyone under 19)
Ireland	Childline, 1800 66 66 66 (free, for anyone up to 18)
Canada	Kids Help Phone, 1-800-668-6868 , or text CONNECT to 686868

Australia	Kids Helpline, 1800 55 1800 (ages 5 to 25)
New Zealand	Youthline, 0800 376 633 , or text 234
US	988 is for every age.

If you're worried about someone

Ask them plainly: "Are you thinking about ending your life?" Studies have found that asking does not put the idea in someone's head, and talking about it may even ease it. Listen, stay with them if you can, and call or text one of the lines above together. Part Three, Chapter 12 (online) says more about helping someone in a crisis, and Chapter 16 (online) about worry, low mood and when to get help.

This book is general education, not a crisis service. The website's tools keep what you type on your own device, so nobody there can see it or reply to it. The numbers were checked in October 2026. Numbers can change; findahelpline.com keeps an up-to-date list.

How to use this book

This is a book about seeing what is really going on, in yourself and between people, without blaming anyone, and then changing one small thing. This copy holds 6 chapters in one part, in the short version. There is no wrong way in.

THE PARTS

Part Two: Between us. One idea per chapter about sharing a life, a home or work with someone, each with a worksheet that puts it to use.

TWO SIZES OF EVERY CHAPTER

Every chapter comes in a short version (about 10 to 15 minutes) and a full version with the research, more examples and more to try. This is the short version. The full version is free at spreadloveandacceptance.com/book.

READ IN ORDER, OR BY NEED

Read it front to back like any book, or start with the chapter that fits what is going on. Each chapter ends with *What to remember*, *This connects to* (the chapters that explain it or put it to use, with page numbers) and *Put it to use*, with codes you can scan for the matching tool.

IN EVERY CHAPTER

-  A short scene: a made-up moment from everyday life.
-  **Words you could use:** sentences to say out loud.
-  **Try this:** one small thing to do this week.
-  **Common mix-ups:** easy mistakes, and what is closer to true.

THE SITE, THE PROGRAM AND PROFESSOR PUDDLES

The book has a free website with the workpapers (pages you fill in) and tools (helpers you use) that the chapters mention; the next page explains both. Nothing you type there leaves your device, and there is no account. The **six-week program** (spreadloveandacceptance.com/prog-01) puts Part Two to work a week at a time, and the **self path** does the same for Part One. **Professor Puddles**, the site's friendly guide, answers questions about the book's ideas.

GO GENTLY

Some chapters touch hard things: grief, shame, anger, worry, trauma. Skip anything that isn't right for today. Nothing here is a test, and nothing needs to be done all at once.

Workpapers, tools and three friends

WORKPAPER WP-03

Workpapers: pages you fill in

A workpaper is a page you fill in, on your own or together: a one-week log, a list of who owns which job, a short check. Each one has a number, like **WP-03**, and it is always called a workpaper, for example “Workpaper WP-03: One owner per job”. The blank workpapers are also at the back of this book, one page each, to copy.

TOOL Tools: helpers you use on the site

A tool is an interactive helper on the website: a quiz, a calm-down timer, a card maker, or the Chat analyzer that reads a message with you. You use it and it gives you something back. It is always called a tool, for example “Tool: Chat analyzer”.

The book keeps the two apart: a workpaper and a tool never share a list. Both are free, need no account, and what you type stays on your device.

Three friends who give hints



Professor Puddles, the site’s cheerful raindrop professor, gives most of the hints: a thought to take with you, and the workpaper or tool that fits.



Tidbit, the quick, curious pup with the big smile and the collar, bounds in now and then with a playful tip.



Sugarfoot, the steady, gentle pup with the long soft ears and the best hugs, turns up with a calm, slow tip.

They keep to the lighter pages. Where a chapter talks about crisis, deep grief or being hurt, the pages stay quiet and plain.

Find it fast

Start with what is going on, not with chapter one. Each line points to the place in the book that helps most, and one tool to try. You can read that part on its own and stop.

SHARING THE LOAD

IF THIS IS GOING ON	READ	PAGE	TRY
We keep arguing about chores.	Part Two · Chapter II · One owner per job	54	WORKPAPER WP-03 One owner per job
I do the remembering and planning, and nobody sees it (the mental load).	Preface to Part Two · The mental load	28	WORKPAPER WP-01 Who did what
We each think we do more than our share.	Preface to Part Two · Why the other person doesn't see it	18	WORKPAPER WP-01 Who did what
The same job keeps slipping, week after week.	Part Two · Chapter V · A repeat usually has no real owner	125	WORKPAPER WP-04 What keeps coming back?
Is the way we share things fair? Can it last?	Part Two · Chapter II · The setup score	54	TOOL Is the setup working for everyone?
We've just had a baby and we're both exhausted.	Part Two · Chapter II · Small children and a new baby	69	WORKPAPER WP-02 How much are you carrying?
We're about to move in together.	Part Two · Chapter V · Starting out: before you move in	130	TOOL The "Who does what?" page
Money between us feels unfair.	Part Two · Chapter IV · Money between you	112	TOOL Who does what? The Money tab
We co-parent across two homes.	Part Two · Chapter III · Two homes	91	WORKPAPER WP-03 One owner per job
We share a house with a housemate, or more than two of us share a home.	Part Two · Chapter IV · A couple and a housemate	113	TOOL The "Who does what?" page

IF THIS IS GOING ON	READ	PAGE	TRY
I'm raising my grandchild (kinship care).	Part Two · Chapter V · Raising a grandchild	131	WORKPAPER WP-03 One owner per job
Faith matters to us, or family elders expect a say.	Part Two · Chapter I · Faith, culture and family voices	47	WORKPAPER WP-13 The 90-second daily check-in
I'm caring for a parent or partner, and it's wearing me down.	Part Two · Chapter III · When "full" has become normal	76	WORKPAPER WP-02 How much are you carrying?
I'm the only one who wants to try this.	Part Two · Chapter II · When only one of you is on board	73	WORKPAPER WP-01 Who did what (your side only)
Someone handed me this book, and I'm not sure why.	If someone handed you this book	11	WORKPAPER WP-03 One owner per job

TALKING IT THROUGH

IF THIS IS GOING ON	READ	PAGE	TRY
Small things turn into big rows.	Part Two · Chapter I · How stress changes your frequency	37	WORKPAPER WP-11 The Calm-Down Kit
We move and talk at different speeds.	Part Two · Chapter I · What sets the frequency	37	WORKPAPER WP-12 Same moment, different speeds
A comment stings and I snap back.	Part Two · Chapter IV · Let a comment land before you react	105	WORKPAPER WP-09 Say it so it lands
Is it us, or is it everything else going on?	Part Two · Chapter III · Leftover stress	76	WORKPAPER WP-14 Is it us, or is it everything else?

HARD SEASONS

IF THIS IS GOING ON	READ	PAGE	TRY
I'm thinking about ending my life, or I'm worried someone is.	If you need help now	5	The page itself

This copy holds only part of the book, so this map lists the problems it covers. The whole book's map has 16 more, and every chapter is free to read at spreadloveandacceptance.com/book. Each thing to try is marked as a workpaper (a page you fill in) or a tool (a helper you use on the site). All are free on the website, with nothing to sign up for; each chapter's end has a code you can scan for them. Looking for a word rather than a problem? The index at the back lists the main ideas.

If someone handed you this book

Maybe it was left on your side of the bed with a page turned down. Maybe someone said, “Could you just read this bit?” Either way, you didn’t choose it. Fair enough. Here is the short version, written for you.

This isn’t a case against you

The book starts from something researchers have found again and again: when two people each estimate their share of the housework, the two answers usually add up to more than 100%. Nobody is lying. You see every minute of your own effort and only some of theirs, and so do they (Chapter II, page 54). So the book never asks who the bad guy is. Its numbers score the setup, never a person.

What’s in it for you

- Fewer repeat arguments about the same jobs.
- Jobs that are clearly yours, so nobody needs to remind you about them.
- Credit for what you already do. Your jobs go on the list too: the car, the bins, the late-night lifts, the things you fix.
- A say in what “fair” means in your house. It isn’t always 50/50 (Chapter IV, page 95).

It doesn’t ask for therapy talk, and you never fill anything in about the other person. You can say no.

A first week: three small things

1. **Log your own week.** Rough minutes on “Who did what”, including the thinking part: booking, remembering, planning. Ten minutes in all. Only yours, never theirs.
2. **Ask one question, and just listen.** “What’s the one job you’d most like to stop thinking about?” Don’t defend or count. Write the answer down.
3. **Take over that job, the whole of it,** including the noticing (below).

Words to open the talk

“I read the bit you gave me. I don’t agree with all of it, but I get the point about the stuff nobody sees.”

“I’d rather own a couple of things properly than ‘help’ with everything. Which one would you most like off your mind?”

“Give me a week to see what I actually do. Then let’s look together.”

Best left out, for now: “Just tell me what to do” (it hands the thinking straight back), “You should have asked” and, in the first five minutes, “I do loads too.” That may be true. Save it for when you both have your logs.

Taking over a whole job, noticing included

Every job has a part you can see (doing it) and parts you can’t: noticing it needs doing, remembering, planning and checking it got done (the Preface, page 18). Taking a job over means all of it.

1. **Pick one job that repeats:** the children’s clothes and shoes, the bins, the car, school forms, the dentist.
2. **Get the handover once.** What it involves, when it’s due, where things are, who to call. Ask your questions now, not every week.
3. **Move the remembering out of their head.** A phone reminder, the calendar, a list on the fridge: anywhere but the other person.
4. **Do it start to finish for a month** without being reminded. If you need reminding, fix your reminder, not the relationship.
5. **Do it your way.** If the result is fine, the method is yours. Their part is to let it be done differently.
6. **Ask for a backstop if you like:** someone who notices a slip and says so once, kindly. A backstop isn’t a supervisor (Chapter II, page 54).

A made-up example. Hester has always looked after the children's clothes: spotting toes at the end of shoes, school sizes, swimming kit, passing on what's outgrown. Wilf takes it over. Hester writes the handover note: sizes, the shop, which drawer holds the next size up. Wilf sets a reminder for the first Sunday of each month: "Shoes, uniform, kit." In week two he misses the PE kit for a school trip. Hester says once, "The trip kit is Thursday," and he adds "school letters" to his Sunday check. A month in, Hester says the biggest change is that she no longer thinks about shoes at eleven at night.

If you think it's already fair

Log your week anyway. If it comes out even, that is useful to know, and the book will say so: a fair score doesn't silence anyone, and a low one doesn't blame anyone. And if this book feels like the wrong place to start, Find it fast, page 9 lists other ways in.

The book in two pictures

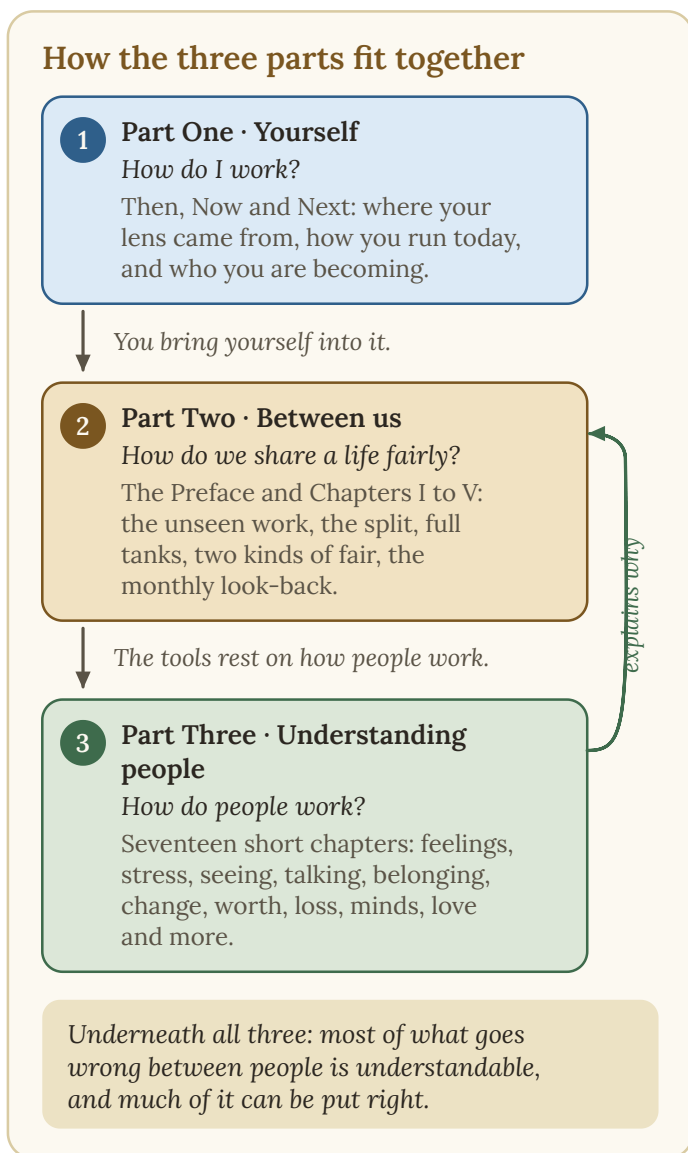


FIGURE 1 How the three parts fit together: you bring yourself into every shared life, and Part Three explains why the Part Two tools work.

Five ideas the book rests on

A shared life that works

I

See the whole load

Count the noticing, remembering and planning, not just the doing.

II

Fix the setup, not the person

When a job keeps slipping, change the arrangement.

III

Read your state first

Check how full your tank is before a hard talk.

IV

Tune how you send and receive

A clash is often crossed signals, not bad intent.

V

Notice the quiet incentives

Unclaimed jobs drift to whoever notices first.

Each starts inside you, then shows up between you.

FIGURE 2 Five ideas the whole book rests on. Each one starts inside you, then shows up between you and the people you share a life with.

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PART TWO

Between us

One idea per chapter about sharing a life, a home or work with someone, each with a worksheet that puts it to use.

IN THIS PART

Preface	The work nobody sees	18
Chapter I	Why we get out of tune	37
Chapter II	Is the split working?	54
Chapter III	Full tanks and different angles	76
Chapter IV	Two kinds of fair	95
Chapter V	The monthly look-back	116



TIDBIT

Tidbit wants you to know: this part comes with workpapers to fill in, together or on your own. Ooh, start with the one-week log!

WORKPAPER WP-01

Who did what · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-01

Preface

PREFACE TO PART TWO

The work nobody sees: invisible labour at home

Part Two of the book is about the people you share a life, a home or a job with, and it opens here. Running a life takes a lot of work that nobody sees. This preface helps you make that work visible, to yourself and to anyone you share it with, so you can talk about it fairly and kindly.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Unseen work quietly adds up | 10. Inside you, and between you |
| 2. A lot of it is thinking, not doing | 11. On your own: your own unseen work |
| 3. The other person usually just hasn't seen it | 12. The fields behind this chapter |
| 4. Writing it down isn't keeping score | 13. Where this comes from: the polymath way |
| 5. Each of you writes only your own side | 14. In real life |
| 6. The borrowed words are there to take the blame away | 15. More kinds of shared life |
| 7. One small step at a time | 16. Your situation, in this part of the book |
| 8. It can help in many kinds of shared life | 17. Common mix-ups |
| 9. The mental load: what the research says | 18. Limits and cautions |

IN SHORT:

- **Running a home takes unseen work:** the noticing, remembering and planning that many people call the mental load.
- **The other person usually just hasn't seen it.** This work hides by nature. It isn't a sign that they don't care.
- **Each of you writes only your own side** of one ordinary week, and you read the two lists together.

- **The list is for seeing, not for billing.** Thank each other for the past, and plan next week.

SUNDAY, 9PM

Someone notices the laundry is still in the washer, the school forms are due on Tuesday, and the birthday card never got posted. They also notice that nobody else has noticed. The house looks fine. That's the problem.

Or, living alone: A widower says, "Since my wife died, I notice how many jobs she quietly carried: the birthday cards, the boiler service, knowing who to ring when someone was ill. I never saw them until they stopped getting done."

01

Unseen work quietly adds up.

Remembering appointments, noticing the milk is low, calming a tense moment: none of it shows up on a calendar, so it rarely gets a thank-you. Over months, it piles up. The book calls this pile *unbilled debt*. Nobody sends a bill for it. You can thank someone for what they carried before; you just don't bill for the past.

For example: Marcus remembers every school form, dentist visit and bit of lunch money for their two kids. His husband, Theo, sees two kids who always seem to have what they need. The work is just out of sight.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"Can I show you some of the things I keep track of? I'm not asking you to pay anything back. I just want you to see them."

TRY THIS:

Tonight, write down three things you did today that nobody saw. Don't do anything with the list yet. Just notice.



PROFESSOR PUDDLES

The easiest way to see unseen work is to write it down for one ordinary week. Each of you logs only your own jobs, and the thinking counts too.

WORKPAPER WP-01

Who did what · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-01

02

A lot of it is thinking, not doing.

Before a job gets done, someone has to notice it, remember it, plan it and check it happened. That thinking takes real time and energy, even though nobody can see it.

For example: In a shared flat, Yasmin notices the internet deal is ending, compares plans, picks one and checks it went through. Paying took two minutes. The thinking took an evening.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Doing it is the quick part. Remembering it and planning it is the part I’d love some help with.”

TRY THIS:

Pick one job at home and split it into four steps: notice, plan, do, check. Who usually does each step?

The work nobody sees

Most of a job happens before and after the doing.

What others see
washing up, the
school run

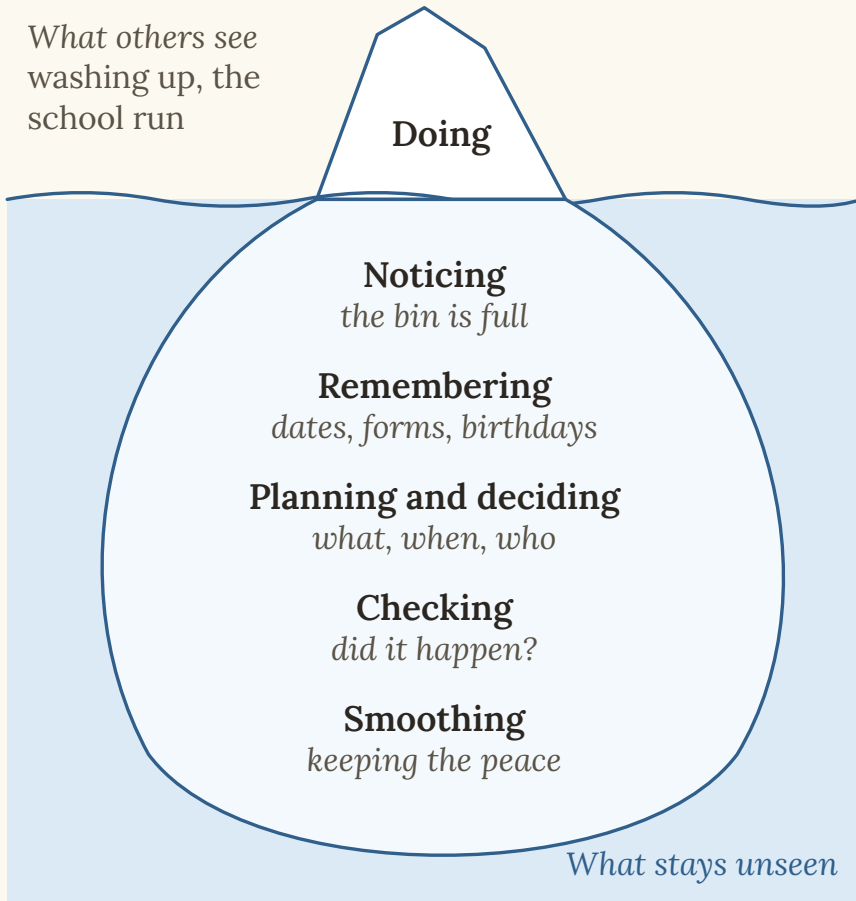


Illustration. The five kinds are this book's plain words; researchers call the thinking part "cognitive labour" (Damingier, 2019).

FIGURE 3 The work nobody sees. Most of a job happens before and after the doing, and whoever holds that part can never fully switch off.

The other person usually just hasn't seen it.

When this work is done well, nothing seems to happen. So the other person isn't ignoring it. From where they stand, it looks like things take care of themselves.

For example: Edna minds her grandchildren three afternoons a week and quietly moves her own doctor visits to fit. Her daughter thinks it all “fits in easily.”

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

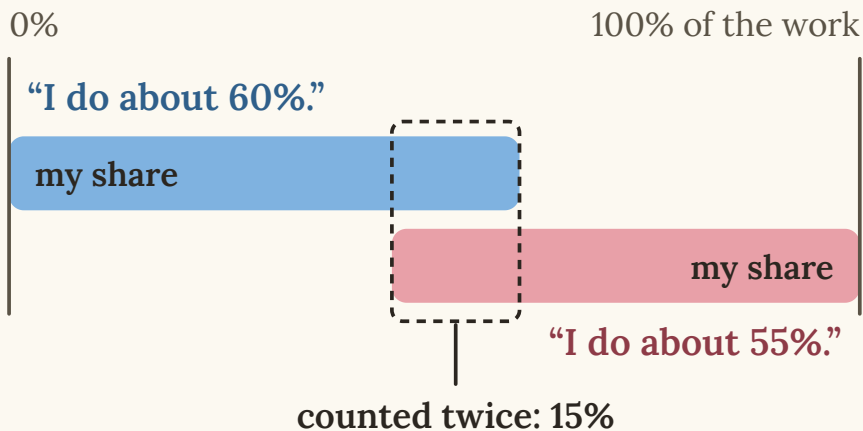
“I don't think you've been ignoring it. I think it's been hard to see from where you are.”

TRY THIS:

Ask one person, “What's something you do that you think I don't see?”
Then just listen, without explaining.

We each remember our own effort best

Two honest guesses about the same home.



Together: 115%. Nobody is lying.
Fix: put both weeks on paper, side by side.

Illustrative numbers. In Ross and Sicolý's 1979 study, partners' separate estimates of their own share usually added up to more than 100%.

FIGURE 4 We each remember our own effort best. Illustrative numbers; in Ross and Sicolý's 1979 study, partners' estimates of their own share usually added up to more than 100 percent.

04

Writing it down isn't keeping score.

The point is for both of you to see the same picture, in the same words, at the same time. Then the talk starts from facts you share, not from two different memories.

The book calls this shared record a *ledger*: a plain list of who did what. It's a way to see, not a bill.

For example: Two coworkers sharing one job each list a week of tasks. Every client call landed on one person. They don't argue about last year; they swap Friday calls.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I'm not trying to win anything. I'd like us both to be looking at the same list."

TRY THIS:

Before you show anyone a list, ask yourself: is this to plan next week, or to prove a point? Share it only if the answer is "plan."

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 1

Who did what

Marcus and Theo, a couple

Who did what

Person A

Marcus

Person B

Theo

Week beginning

5 October 2026

Part A: Who did what, this week

Day	Task noticed or done	Who did it	Minutes (rough)	How it came up: asked for, noticed, or thinking time?
Mon	Plan the week's meals	Theo	20	Thinking and planning
Mon	Cook dinner	Marcus	45	Asked for
Tue	Book the boiler service	Theo	15	Noticed and handled
Tue	Dishes	Marcus	20	Asked for
Wed	Laundry, wash to put away	Theo	60	Noticed and handled

Day	Task noticed or done	Who did it	Minutes (rough)	How it came up: asked for, noticed, or thinking time?
Thu	Remember Marcus's mum's birthday card	Theo	10	Thinking and planning
Fri	Bins and recycling out	Marcus	10	Noticed and handled
Sat	Big food shop	Both	70	Asked for

THIS WEEK'S TOTALS

Marcus

110 minutes (44%), of which 10 noticed and handled without being asked

Theo

140 minutes (56%), of which 105 noticed and handled without being asked (30 of them thinking and planning)

Workload balance score

0.88. It describes how the logged work was split this week, not anyone in it.

Unasked-for work

Theo did 91% of the work that was noticed and handled without anyone asking. This is the work that is easiest to miss. Say it out loud, and give the jobs that repeat a named owner.

Part B (optional): Kind ways to say no

Left blank this week.

A made-up example. Names and details are invented.

Fill in your own: Who did what (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/fill/wp-01)

Each of you writes only your own side.

Nobody fills in anything for the other person. You each note what you did, then read the two lists together. That keeps it fair and keeps it kind. Each of you also adds the context only you have, like what the week was like, so you both understand rather than judge.

For example: Arran, Dani and Sol are three partners sharing a home. Each writes only their own list. Reading them together, Sol learns Arran has been calling the landlord every month.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I've written my side. Would you like to write yours, in your own words, when you're ready?"

TRY THIS:

Add one line of context to your own list, like "long week at work" or "the kids were ill." It helps the other person understand, not judge.

The borrowed words are there to take the blame away.

The book uses a few terms from accounting and science because they describe what's happening without saying whose fault it is. Each one is explained in plain words, and you never need them to use anything here.

For example: Two brothers share their mum's care. Instead of "you never help," one says, "There's some unseen work here we haven't looked at." That's much easier to hear.

New together? If words like "ledger" or "debt" feel heavy a few months in, use your own. "Our list" and "the stuff nobody sees" work just as well. The idea stays the same: two people looking at one honest picture, kindly, so nobody has to guess.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"Let's look at how it's set up, not at each other."

TRY THIS:

Swap one blaming phrase you use, like “you never,” for a plain one, like “this job keeps landing on me.”

07

One small step at a time.

Each chapter adds one idea and one tool. One week of notes is enough to start. Later come a 90-second daily check-in about how much you were carrying today, a weekly catch-up and a monthly look-back. If you use the monthly look-back later, a few lines a week is all it needs.

For example: A nurse on nights and a partner on days hardly see each other awake. They start with one week of notes on the fridge. No changes yet.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Could we just try one week of notes and see what we notice? We don’t have to change anything yet.”

TRY THIS:

Pick a start day this week and set one reminder on your phone. That’s the whole first step.



TIDBIT

Tidbit wants you to know: counting jobs isn’t keeping score. It’s more like a treasure hunt for the work nobody noticed! The quick split check is a good first sniff.

TOOL

Who does what? Quick look · spreadloveandacceptance.com/lemonade-stand

08

It can help in many kinds of shared life.

Partners, family, roommates, co-parents and coworkers all share unseen work. The examples often use a couple at home, but the ideas fit anyone who shares a load.

For example: A foster carer tracks family visits, social worker calls and school meetings. A teenager in the home quietly cooks for the younger ones twice a

week. Both count.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Whatever we are to each other, we share some work. Could we look at it together?”

TRY THIS:

Name one shared load in your life that isn't a couple: a family group chat, a shared flat, a team at work.

YOUR PART, AND ONLY YOUR PART. You can't make anyone see the unseen work, and you can't write their side of the ledger. You can write your own side honestly, say it once, kindly, and then match what you take on to what comes back. If you keep carrying more than your share with nothing in return, stepping back towards your share isn't a punishment. It protects the energy you need to stay kind. More in Part One: who you are today (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-2-now)

FRIDAY, AFTER WORK

“You didn't have to do all that,” they say, and they mean it kindly. You think: someone did. The list only ever lived in your head, so to them it looked like it took care of itself.

The mental load: what the research says

Many people call the thinking side of home life the **mental load**: the noticing and planning that come before a job gets done, and the checking after. Knowing the baby needs the next size of clothes. Remembering the form, the jab, the party present. It's real work, even when it doesn't look like any.

Studies of couples find some patterns, *on average*. In couples of a man and a woman, women tend to do more of the noticing and checking (Allison Daminger, 2019). After a first baby, a gap often opens: in one study of working couples, mothers took on most of the new childcare while keeping their paid

hours (Jill Yavorsky and colleagues, 2015). Arlie Hochschild called the home work that starts after paid work ends “the second shift.”

There is a fair point on the other side too. Sometimes the parent who knows how things are done holds on to that, without meaning to. Researchers call it *gatekeeping*. When a parent openly invites the other in, and lets them do it their own way, the other parent tends to do more of the care (Sarah Allen and Alan Hawkins, 1999; Sarah Schoppe-Sullivan and colleagues, 2008).

These are averages across many homes, not a verdict on yours. In your home it may be the other way round, or already even, or shared between two men or two women. That’s why the book asks you to look at your own week on paper, instead of guessing.

For example (made up): Hollie and Gareth have a toddler and a baby, and Gareth works shifts. Their week’s minutes come out nearly even. But Hollie did almost three-quarters of the jobs nobody asked anyone to do. Their week is in Chapter II (page 69).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“You do lots of the doing. It’s the remembering I’d love you to take some of: whole jobs, start to finish.” Or, the other way round: “Show me once how you like it done, then let me do it my way.”

Inside you, and between you

- **In you:** Notice everything you carry, including the thinking and feeling work you have never counted. Notice, too, the work others do that you may have missed.
- **Between you and others:** Put both lists on one shared, fair page, so nobody has to argue about whose work “counts.” Jobs nobody claims tend to drift to whoever notices first, and a specific thank-you helps keep things steady.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I want to see what you carry, too, not just what I carry.” “Could we put both our weeks on one page?”

On your own: your own unseen work

You don't need anyone else to start seeing the unseen. For one week, notice the jobs only you remember: the appointments, the restocking, the smoothing-over. Write them down for yourself, not as a bill.

- Count it, don't charge it. The point is to see your real load, so you can plan your energy.
- Notice which jobs are yours by choice and which just landed on you.
- Pick one job you could hand back, drop or do less often, and say so kindly.

For example: Nicola, divorced, has the children every other week. On paper, she sees she still buys presents for both sides of the family. She hands his side back, kindly, in one message.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I've noticed I've been doing this for both of us. From next month, could you take it on?" Or, to yourself: "That was real work, even if nobody saw it."

TRY THIS:

Circle one job on your list that is yours by choice. Enjoy it. Then circle one that just landed on you, and decide what you'll do about it. More for people living alone or after a breakup: On my own (spreadloveandacceptance.com/on-my-own).

IN THE INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM:

Step 1: check your battery (spreadloveandacceptance.com/self-path) · Step 6: kind ways to say no · Part One: your circle of control (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-2-now-in-depth) · The whole book on sharing the load (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/topic-share-the-load)

The fields behind this chapter

Christian, who wrote this book, worked as a government auditor and is a polymath: someone who studied thirteen fields deeply (psychology,

philosophy, behavioural science, neurobiology, economics, business, finance, holistic therapies, aromatherapy, the art of debating, politics, music and the healing power of laughter). This chapter grows from 5 of them:

- **Finance** (See the whole load): The idea of an unbilled hour: work that was done and logged, but never invoiced, so the client never sees it.
- **Economics** (See the whole load): Attention is limited. Every reminder you hold in your head takes up some of it.
- **Psychology** (See the whole load): We remember our own effort best.
- **Philosophy** (See the whole load): Telling what we know from how things look. In Plato's Cave, people mistake shadows for the real thing.
- **Business** (Notice the quiet incentives): Work that belongs to everyone belongs to no one, and it lands on whoever notices first.

Two fields, one idea: Finance + Psychology. In double-entry bookkeeping, every amount is recorded in two places, and the two must agree. And we each remember our own effort best. Put together: each person keeps their own record, and the two records are read side by side.

Where this comes from: the polymath way

This book is built on a polymath's habit: looking at very different fields and noticing that the same few roots keep turning up. Those roots are balance, signal and noise, feedback loops, limited capacity, ownership, quiet incentives, and state and setting. A ledger, a nervous system and a conversation look nothing alike, yet each one has a limit, each one can lose a message in the noise, and each one stays steady only when what goes out is matched by what comes back.

Christian saw those roots across thirteen fields. The four newest to the list are the art of debating, politics, music and the healing power of laughter. They shape the gentler parts of the book: how to disagree without a fight, how a small group decides fairly, how tone and tempo change what lands, and how a shared laugh can repair a hard moment.

Read the polymath way · See how every field connects to every other

In real life

- **Partners:** One of you keeps track of birthdays, presents and thank-you notes for both families. The other has never had to think about it.
- **Family:** One grown-up child handles a parent's appointments and prescription refills each week. The others see a parent who is "doing fine."
- **Roommates:** One roommate always buys the toilet paper and the dish soap. Nobody asked them to. It just keeps happening.
- **Coworkers:** One person books the meetings, takes the notes and follows up afterwards. It isn't in anyone's job description.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I didn't know you did that. Thank you." "Can we look at who does the remembering, not just the doing?"

More kinds of shared life

Unseen work turns up wherever people share something:

- **Two mums:** one holds the baby's dates and forms in her head; the other does lots of hands-on care.
- **More than two partners:** a job nobody owns lands on whoever notices first. More than two (spreadloveandacceptance.com/more-than-two)
- **Friends:** one friend always makes the plans and sends the "how are you?" Friends (spreadloveandacceptance.com/friends)
- **Teens:** walking the dog and minding a sister feels like a lot to them, and like "helping a bit" to adults. For teens (spreadloveandacceptance.com/teens)
- **Grandparents and grown-up children:** childcare comes with planning work, too. Grown-up children (spreadloveandacceptance.com/grown-up-children)
- **Adult siblings:** one sorts a late parent's paperwork for months. Family rifts (spreadloveandacceptance.com/family-rifts)
- **Co-parents and carers:** packing the right kit for two homes; meetings and reports on top of care. Co-parenting (spreadloveandacceptance.com/)

co-parenting) · Foster and kinship (spreadloveandacceptance.com/foster-and-kinship)

- **Housemates, coworkers and business partners:** one person always notices the bathroom, or chases the invoices. Sharing a room (spreadloveandacceptance.com/sharing-a-room)
- **Illness, different hours, distance, two faiths:** the one at home more, or the one who is well, becomes the default; the ill partner manages unseen pain and energy. When one is ill (spreadloveandacceptance.com/when-one-is-ill) · Different hours (spreadloveandacceptance.com/different-hours) · Long distance (spreadloveandacceptance.com/long-distance) · Two faiths (spreadloveandacceptance.com/two-faiths)

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I don’t need it to be even. I need it to be seen.”

Find your own starting point: Help by relationship

(spreadloveandacceptance.com/by-relationship) · How it fits your relationships (spreadloveandacceptance.com/relationships).

Your situation, in this part of the book

Some situations get their own section in Part Two:

- **Faith, culture, elders and in-laws:** Chapter I (page 47)
- **Small children or a new baby:** Chapter II (page 69)
- **Two homes after a split, and step-parents:** Chapter III (page 91)
- **Money between you:** Chapter IV (page 112)
- **A couple and a housemate:** Chapter IV (page 113)
- **New together, or about to move in:** Chapter V (page 130)
- **Grandparents raising a grandchild:** Chapter V (page 131)

Common mix-ups

- **“If it mattered, they would have asked for help.”** Unseen work is often hidden from the person doing it, too, until it’s written down.
- **“Writing it down means I’m angry.”** It means you want you both to see the same picture.
- **“It has to be exactly 50/50.”** The goal is a split you can both see and both agree to, not a perfect half.
- **“Mental work doesn’t count, only chores do.”** Remembering, planning and checking take real time and energy. Put them on the list.
- **“We should start by going over the last ten years.”** Start with one ordinary week. You can thank someone for the past without trying to settle it.
- **“The one doing less doesn’t care.”** Usually they just can’t see it yet. Nobody here is the villain. Once you’ve both seen it, what you do next is a choice you make together.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I don’t think either of us is the bad guy here. We just haven’t seen the same picture yet.”

TRY THIS:

Each of you, on your own, list the things you did this week that nobody saw. Then swap lists.

Next, read the other list slowly and say one thing on it you hadn't noticed before.

Then pick one item from their list and say thank you for it, in a specific way.

If writing things down isn't your style, a ten-minute talk over a cup of coffee with the same questions works too.

Keep it light. This is a first look, not a verdict. The fixing comes later in the book.

Limits and cautions

These tools only work when each person feels free to say no, to ask for a pause, or to keep their own notes private. If talking about the split ever feels unsafe, or one of you feels you can't say no, stop using the tools and talk with a trained counsellor on your own. When someone is afraid of their partner, counselling together isn't advised. Not safe at home?

(spreadloveandacceptance.com/safety) lists free, private hotlines.

A list should never be demanded, checked over your shoulder, or used to keep track of where you go or what you spend. If that is happening, it isn't a ledger. It's control, and it's not your fault. Signs to look out for. If you are a counsellor or group leader using this book with others, see For counsellors (spreadloveandacceptance.com/for-counselors).

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ✓ **Running a home takes unseen work:** the noticing, remembering and planning that many people call the mental load.
- ✓ **The other person usually just hasn't seen it.** This work hides by nature. It isn't a sign that they don't care.
- ✓ **Each of you writes only your own side** of one ordinary week, and you read the two lists together.
- ✓ **The list is for seeing, not for billing.** Thank each other for the past, and plan next week.

THIS CONNECTS TO

Part Two · Chapter II · Is the split working?

Putting the unseen work into numbers you both trust

page 54

Part Three · Chapter 3 · How we see each other

Why each person sees their own work first

read online

Part Three · Chapter 12 · Helping others well

Care work and how not to burn out

read online

Part Two · Chapter IV · Two kinds of fair

What fair means to each of you, before you talk

page 95

PUT IT TO USE



**Six-week program, week 1:
see the work that's already
happening**

[spreadloveandacceptance.com/
prog-01](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/prog-01)



Who did what

[spreadloveandacceptance.com/
workpapers/wp-01](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-01)

I

PART TWO • CHAPTER I

Why we get out of tune: communication at home

Why two kind, reasonable people can end up in a tangle neither of them started, and how to get back in step.

IN THIS CHAPTER

1. The tangle often isn't about the words
2. Nearly in step is the noisy part
3. Three things knock you out of tune
4. Stress changes your station
5. Nobody has to be wrong
6. Get back in tune before you carry on
7. Go back in with a clear sentence
8. Small daily check-ins keep you in tune
9. Faith, culture and family voices
10. Inside you, and between you
11. On your own: your side of the tuning
12. The fields behind this chapter
13. In real life
14. More kinds of shared life
15. Common mix-ups

IN SHORT:

- **A clash often isn't about the words.** Pace, tone and urgency can be out of step even when both of you mean well.
- **Nobody has to be wrong.** Name it ("we're out of tune"), pause with a time to come back, and slow down.
- **Go back in with one clear sentence:** a fact, a feeling and an ask.
- **A 90-second daily check-in** keeps small drifts small.

TUESDAY, 6:40PM

"I said I'd do it." "I know, I'm just asking when." Four sentences later, nobody is talking about the bins any more, and neither of you can point to the moment it turned.

01

The tangle often isn't about the words.

Two people can each say something reasonable and still clash, because the tone underneath doesn't match. It's like two radios slightly out of tune: together they make a crackle that neither one was making alone.

For example: Two housemates. "Is anyone using the oven tonight?" "Why, did I leave a mess?" A plain question was heard as a complaint.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I think the words were fine. Something in how we said them got crossed."

TRY THIS:

After your next small clash, ask yourself: was it the words, or the way they came out?

The radio whistle

Two reasonable signals, nearly in step.

Your pace and tone



Their pace and tone



together make...



a whistle neither one sent

Not “you started it” or “I started it”.

It started, between us.

Illustration. The picture is borrowed from radio (a “beat” between two close frequencies). Using it for people is this book’s idea.

FIGURE 5 The radio whistle. Two reasonable signals, nearly in step, can make a clash that neither person started: it started between you.

02

Nearly in step is the noisy part.

Radios on very different stations don’t whistle at each other. The whistle comes when they are close but not quite matched. People who know each other well can still clash. Research suggests we check our meaning less with people we’re close to, because we assume they already understand us.

For example: Two sisters who talk every day clash over holiday plans far more than they ever do with cousins they see once a year. Being close means more overlap.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I think I assumed you knew what I meant. Let me say it more clearly.”

TRY THIS:

With someone close, check one meaning today: “Just so I’ve got it right, you mean...?”



TIDBIT

Ooh, Tidbit loves this one: compare your daily rhythms and see whose engine runs fast in the morning and whose at night. Different speeds aren’t wrong, just different!

TOOL **Rhythms side by side** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/tools/frequency-calibration

03

Three things knock you out of tune.

How fast you’re talking. The tone, when a simple update is heard as a complaint. And how urgent it feels: “when you get a chance” can mean tonight to one person and next week to the other.

For example: A business partner texts “Need to talk” between two meetings. The other partner reads it as a crisis and can’t sleep. It was about a printer. A text loses most of the tone, so urgency is easy to misread.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“By when would be good?” “Is this an update, or a worry?”

TRY THIS:

Add a time to your next request. Not “at some point,” but “by Friday.”

Stress changes your station.

When you're tense, you may talk faster and be more likely to hear a pause as a snub. When you're tired and flat, your replies get slower and shorter. The Nervous System Ladder (spreadloveandacceptance.com/quick-checks), a thirty-second self-check, helps you guess which one you're in. It's a best guess, not a reading.

For example: A dad gets home from a night shift and answers his teenager with one word. The teen hears "he doesn't care." He is just running on empty.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I'm running low right now. It's not about you. Can we talk after I've slept?"

TRY THIS:

Before a tricky talk, name your state to yourself: calm, revved up or running on empty.

Nobody has to be wrong.

Two radios that both work fine will still crackle if they're slightly off. Arguing about whose fault the static is won't clear it. Retuning (getting back in step) will.

For example: A grandmother tells her grown-up son, "You look tired." She means care. He hears "you can't cope." Neither of them is wrong about what they meant or heard.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I don't think either of us meant it that way. Can we try that again?"

TRY THIS:

In your next clash, say "we" instead of "you": "We got crossed there."

Get back in tune before you carry on.

Say it out loud: “I think we’re out of sync.” Check how tense you feel. Either of you can call a pause, and the person who paused names a time to come back. Gently slow down, with shorter turns and more pauses. Only then go back to the actual topic.

For example: Two dorm roommates agree on a pause word, “static,” on a calm day. Mid-argument about noise, one says it. They stop, and come back at 9pm as agreed.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I need ten minutes. I’ll come back at half past.”

TRY THIS:

Agree a pause word with someone today, while you are both calm.

Retuning, step by step

Before you carry on with a talk that has started to whistle.

1 Name the mismatch, without blame
“I think we’re on different wavelengths.”



2 Check your own state
Revved up or running on empty? Pause, and name a time to come back.



3 Slow the pace on purpose
Shorter turns, more pauses, a lower voice.



4 Then go back to the topic
It still matters. Now you can both hear it.

This book’s four steps. Anyone can call a pause, and nobody should be blocked from leaving the room.

FIGURE 6 Retuning, step by step, before you carry on with a talk that has started to whistle.

Go back in with a clear sentence.

When you return to the topic, say the fact, how you feel, and what you'd like. "The bins go out early on Wednesday morning. I get anxious when they're late. Could you put them out tonight?"

For example: A co-parent texts: "The swim kit wasn't in the bag. I felt stressed at drop-off. Could you pack it on Sunday nights?" A fact, a feeling, an ask.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"The fact is... I feel... Could we...?"

TRY THIS:

Write one fact, feeling and ask sentence about something small, before you need it.



PROFESSOR PUDDLES

When you go back in, one clear sentence beats a speech. This workpaper helps you shape it before you say it.

WORKPAPER WP-09

Say it so it lands · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-09

Small daily check-ins keep you in tune.

A short chat each day, like the 90-second daily check-in (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-13-daily-check-in), can make tiny corrections before small things drift into a big argument. Habit research suggests small routines at a regular time are easier to keep than big ones done rarely. The quiet, easy stretches are the ones that drift most, so keep it going even when nothing seems wrong (see Complacency (spreadloveandacceptance.com/complacency)).

For example: A long-distance couple in two time zones send one 90-second voice note each morning. It's tiny, but it keeps them in step.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"Today I was carrying quite a lot. One thing I liked today was..."

TRY THIS:

Pick a time and a cue, like right after dinner, and try the check-in for three days.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 2

The 90-second daily check-in

Priya and Dev, a couple on different shifts

The 90-second daily check-in

Person A

Priya

Person B

Dev

Week beginning

5 October 2026

Each day

Day	Person	Load	One thing I appreciated today	One small thing that didn't feel great	One thing that would help tomorrow
Mon	Priya	High	You left soup in the fridge before my night shift	Woke up to the washing still in the machine	A text when you're leaving work
Mon	Dev	Medium	Your note on the kettle		Bins out before I go at six
Tue	Priya	High	You kept the house quiet till noon		Ten minutes together at the shift change
Tue	Dev	Low	You booked the car in	Missed you at dinner again	
Wed	Priya	Medium	Breakfast together at 8		Early night

Day	Person	Load	One thing I appreciated today	One small thing that didn't feel great	One thing that would help tomorrow
Wed	Dev	Medium	You remembered my mum's call		

LOAD THIS WEEK

Priya

2 high, 1 medium, 0 low

Dev

0 high, 2 medium, 1 low

The weekly catch-up

Sore spot that keeps coming up	Times this week	Move to
<i>Washing left in the machine</i>	2	<i>One owner per job</i>
<i>Missing each other at dinner</i>	2	<i>Keep watching</i>

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. One sentence each, then just listen: no debating, no solving.

Fill in your own: The 90-second daily check-in
(spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/fill/wp-13)

YOUR PART, AND ONLY YOUR PART. You control what you send, whether you check how it landed, and whether you step out to retune. You don't control how it's heard or how fast the other person settles. Matching energy here means matching care and effort, never volume: if someone gets louder, you don't have to follow. Stay at your level, and give the conversation the energy it gives back. More in Part One: who you are today (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-2-now)

SATURDAY, 10AM

“We should clear out the spare room at some point.” One of you meant this month. The other heard today and has already cancelled their plans in their head. By lunchtime you’re both upset about a room nobody has touched.

Faith, culture and family voices

For many couples, faith is where they turn first. If you share a faith, it can be one of your strongest tools for staying in tune.

- **A shared rhythm:** praying together, or a quiet moment after worship, can be your daily check-in.
- **A pause with a purpose:** some couples pray, each on their own, before they come back to a hard talk. The pause still has a time to come back.
- **Your community:** a pastor, imam, rabbi, priest or trusted elder can be a good first person to talk to. Many can also suggest a trained counsellor who shares your faith.

For example (made up): Emeka and Ngozi, married 26 years, do their monthly look-back on a Sunday after church, over lunch. When a talk gets heated, either of them can say, “Let’s pray on it and come back at eight.” And they do.

Culture shapes how you talk, too. In many families, respect for elders decides who can speak plainly to whom. One habit helps: each of you speaks to your own parents and relatives, after you’ve agreed the message together.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Can we pray about this and talk again tonight?” “Mum, we love you, and we’ve thought about it carefully. This year we’ll visit in August, not at Easter.”

From two faiths or cultures? See [Two faiths or cultures, one family](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/two-faiths) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/two-faiths).

Inside you, and between you

- **In you:** Know your own pace, your usual tone and what “soon” means to you. Notice when stress speeds you up or slows you down.
- **Between you and others:** When a clash starts, treat it as a tuning problem, not a moral failing. Retune together, then translate what you meant into words the other person can hear.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I think this is a tuning problem, not a you problem.” “What did you hear me say? I want to check it came out right.”

On your own: your side of the tuning

Getting out of tune takes two, but retuning can start with one. You can learn your own pace, tone and urgency, so you notice when you’re the one running fast or slow.

- Learn your early signs of drifting: a tight chest, a clipped reply, wanting to win.
- Learn how you take words in best, and say it once: “I hear things better in writing.”
- When you drift, step out, settle and come back. You don’t need anyone’s permission to retune yourself.

For example: Hamid lives alone and notices his texts to friends come out short when he’s tired. Now he waits until morning to answer anything that matters.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I’m tired, so I might sound shorter than I mean. Can I reply properly tomorrow?”

TRY THIS:

For one day, notice the first sign in your body that you're drifting. Write it down. More for people on their own: On my own (spreadloveandacceptance.com/on-my-own).

IN THE INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM:

Step 2: get to know your wiring (spreadloveandacceptance.com/self-path) ·

Step 4: plan what settles you · Part One: who you are today · The whole book on talking it through (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/topic-talk-it-through)

The fields behind this chapter

This chapter draws on 5 of the author's thirteen fields (see the Preface (page 18) or the About page (spreadloveandacceptance.com/about)):

- **Psychology** (Tune how you send and receive): The gap between intent and impact: why a clear, kind sentence can still land as an attack, once pace, tone or urgency slips.
- **Neurobiology** (Read your state first): How stress changes your frequency, and how you sound and hear.
- **Philosophy** (Fix the setup, not the person): Nobody has to be wrong. Zhuangzi's Empty Boat: much of the time, the bump was no one's plan.
- **Behavioural science** (Tune how you send and receive): Small and often. A small routine at a regular time is easier to keep.
- **Holistic therapies** (Read your state first): Body first, argument second. Settle your own state before you go back to the talk.

Two fields, one idea: Neurobiology + Psychology. A tired body changes how words sound and how they're heard. So the same sentence can be fine on Saturday and a fight on Tuesday. Check your state, then say it.

In real life

- **Partners:** “Did you pay the gas bill?” is meant as a reminder. After a long day, it lands as “you forgot again.”
- **Family:** A parent asks, “Are you coming on Sunday?” They mean it as a simple question. Their grown-up child hears guilt.
- **Roommates:** A message says, “Can we talk about the kitchen?” One roommate meant a quick chat. The other spends all afternoon worrying.
- **Coworkers:** “Quick question” arrives at 5:55pm. The sender meant tomorrow is fine. The reader thinks it’s urgent and stays late.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I meant that as a question, not a complaint. Sorry it came out sharp.”

More kinds of shared life

Getting out of tune happens wherever people talk often:

- **Two dads:** “Did you call the school?” is a reminder to one and a test to the other.
- **Three partners:** two speak fast and one slowly, so the slow one gets talked over. More than two (spreadloveandacceptance.com/more-than-two)
- **Friends:** a one-word reply after a long message reads as cold, when they were just busy. Friends (spreadloveandacceptance.com/friends)
- **Gaming and phones:** “Five more minutes” means five to one person and a match to the other. Gaming and time together (spreadloveandacceptance.com/gaming-and-time-together)
- **Teens and parents:** a parent’s worry comes out fast and sounds like anger. For teens (spreadloveandacceptance.com/teens)
- **Adult siblings:** after years apart, an old nickname lands like an old fight. Family rifts (spreadloveandacceptance.com/family-rifts)
- **Foster and kinship carers:** a child who has been hurt may hear a raised voice as danger, even when it isn’t. Foster and kinship (spreadloveandacceptance.com/foster-and-kinship)

- **Different hours, illness, two faiths:** a tired shift worker, a partner in pain, or two family styles of speaking can all shift the tune. Different hours (spreadloveandacceptance.com/different-hours) · When one is ill (spreadloveandacceptance.com/when-one-is-ill) · Two faiths

Find your own starting point: Help by relationship
(spreadloveandacceptance.com/by-relationship).

Common mix-ups

- **“Retuning means giving in.”** It doesn’t. You still come back to the topic. You just come back when you can hear each other.
- **“If we’re out of sync, one of us must be wrong.”** Two fair points in two different tones can still clash.
- **“Slowing down means I don’t care.”** Slowing down is how you show you want to get it right.
- **“A pause means the topic is dropped.”** A pause always comes with a time to come back.
- **“We should push through while we’re on the subject.”** Pushing on through static usually makes more static.

TRY THIS:

Next time a conversation starts to go wrong, pause and say so kindly, instead of pushing through.

Before then, agree on a shared phrase, like “I think we’re out of tune.” That way it feels like a signal, not a criticism.

For one week, each of you notes one moment you felt out of step. At the end, compare: was it mostly pace, tone or urgency?

When someone says “when you get a chance,” kindly ask, “By when would be good?”

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I think we’re out of tune. Can we slow down?” “I want to get this right, so I’m going to go slower.”

A limit to keep in mind: These tools only work when each person feels free to say no, to ask for a pause, or to keep their own notes private. If talking things through ever feels unsafe, or one of you feels you can’t say no, stop using the tools and talk with a trained counsellor on your own. When someone is afraid of their partner, counselling together isn’t advised. Not safe at home? (spreadloveandacceptance.com/safety) lists free, private hotlines.

A pause is for both of you. If one person is never allowed to pause, or a “pause” is used to punish with days of silence, that isn’t retuning. Signs to look out for.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ✓ **A clash often isn’t about the words.** Pace, tone and urgency can be out of step even when both of you mean well.
- ✓ **Nobody has to be wrong.** Name it (“we’re out of tune”), pause with a time to come back, and slow down.
- ✓ **Go back in with one clear sentence:** a fact, a feeling and an ask.
- ✓ **A 90-second daily check-in** keeps small drifts small.

THIS CONNECTS TO

Part Three · Chapter 4 · How communication works

How meaning, tone and listening work

[read online](#)

Part Three · Chapter 2 · Stress and the nervous system

Why stress speeds people up or shuts them down

[read online](#)

Part One · Now · Your wiring, weather and words

How you like to be spoken to

[read online](#)

Part Three · Chapter 9 · Minds that work differently

When pace and tone are a wiring difference

[read online](#)

PUT IT TO USE



Six-week program, week 1

[spreadloveandacceptance.com/
prog-01](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/prog-01)



The 90-second daily check-in

[spreadloveandacceptance.com/
workpapers/
wp-13-daily-check-in](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-13-daily-check-in)

II

PART TWO · CHAPTER II

Is the split working? A fair look at chores at home

One gentle question: can the way you share the work keep going, or is one of you quietly running on empty?

IN THIS CHAPTER

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Look at the month, not last night | 10. Inside you, and between you |
| 2. Three things go in | 11. On your own: is your own load working? |
| 3. Balance: how the hours split | 12. The fields behind this chapter |
| 4. Ownership: does each job have a name? | 13. In real life |
| 5. Stress: how full each stress tank is | 14. Common mix-ups |
| 6. One number comes out, from 0 to 1 | 15. Small children and a new baby |
| 7. Start with the biggest shortfall | 16. If only one of you wants to try this |
| 8. It judges the setup, never a person | 17. More for your situation |
| 9. Words this chapter uses | |

IN SHORT:

- **Look at the month, not last night.** Use what you both wrote down, not memory.
- **Three things go in:** balance (how the hours split), ownership (does each job have a name?) and stress (how full each tank is).
- **One number comes out, from 0 to 1.** Start with whichever part pulled it down most.
- **It judges the setup, never a person.** It's where a talk starts, not how one ends.

ANY GIVEN WEEK

One of you is quietly doing eleven small things a day that the other has never had to think about. When the other one says it feels even, they mean it. From inside each person's own week, it does.

01

Look at the month, not last night.

When people ask “Is this working?”, the answer usually comes from whatever happened most recently. This chapter asks a calmer question, using what you both wrote down. Re-ask it every few months, even when things seem fine, because a split that worked once can quietly go stale.

For example: Two housemates had one awful week of dishes. The whole month showed three fine weeks and one exam week.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Can we look at the whole month before we decide anything?”

TRY THIS:

Put a short check in your calendar for about a month from now.



SUGARFOOT

Sugarfoot's tip: one bad evening isn't the whole story. Give it a month, then run the check together, slowly, with a snack.

TOOL

Fair split check: this week · [spreadloveandacceptance.com/
is-the-setup-working](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/is-the-setup-working)

02

Three things go in.

How evenly the hours are shared. Whether every regular job has a clear owner (the job list, One owner per job (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-03-one-owner-per-job)). And how stressed each of you already is from everything else going on.

A **workpaper** is one of the site's free fill-in worksheets. You don't need any of them to start. Rough notes on paper work too.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Let’s each bring our own numbers, so neither of us has to guess.”

TRY THIS:

Open the three worksheets once, just to see what they ask.

Is the split working?

Three readings go in. One snapshot, from 0 to 1, comes out.

Sam and Alex's first week (a made-up example)

Workload balance

short 0.16

0.24 of 0.40

how the hours split

Ownership clarity

short 0.07

0.28 of 0.35

a name on every job

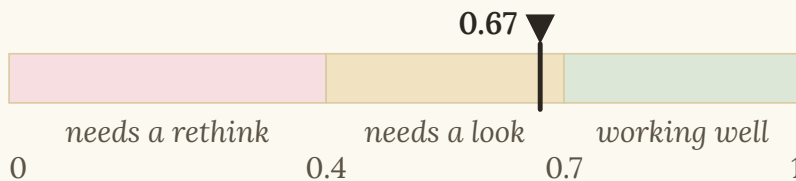
Leftover stress

short 0.10

0.15 of 0.25

how full each tank is

Add them up: $0.24 + 0.28 + 0.15 = 0.67$



Start with the biggest shortfall.
It judges the setup, never a person.

The weights and bands are this book's own choice,
not research findings. A snapshot, not a sentence.

FIGURE 7 Is the split working? Three readings go in and one snapshot comes out. Start with the biggest shortfall. It judges the setup, never a person.

Balance: how the hours split.

From your week-long logs, work out each person's share of the hours. An even split scores 1. One person doing everything scores 0. It doesn't matter which person is doing more. If you agreed an uneven split that suits you (say, one of you works longer hours outside the home), compare against that split instead.

For example: Three partners log 30 hours of home jobs: 15, 9 and 6. An even share is 10 each.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I'm not keeping score of you. I just want us both to see the hours."

TRY THIS:

Log one week each, and include the small jobs that take under ten minutes.

Three or more of you? Compare each person's share with an even share ($100 \div$ number of people), or with a split you agreed. The "Who does what?" page (spreadloveandacceptance.com/lemonade-stand), where each person lists their hours, does the arithmetic.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 3

Who does what? Quick look

Wren, Josh and Mei, housemates (Wren's view)

Quick look: who does what at home

Mark who mostly does each job. The picture builds as you go, the thinking work too.

Your name

Wren

Their name

Josh

Person 3

Mei

Job	Who mostly does it
Dishes	Shared
Laundry	Shared
Cleaning the bathroom	Josh
Cooking dinner	Mei
Grocery shopping	Wren
Paying bills	Wren
Noticing what's running low	Wren
Planning the week	Mei
Remembering dates and appointments	Wren

HOW IT LOOKS

Here's how it looks from your side, 9 jobs so far.

Everyday jobs: mostly shared. 6 jobs: Wren 2 · Josh 1 · Mei 1 · Shared 2.

Planning and remembering: mostly Wren. 3 jobs: Wren 2 · Mei 1.

The thinking work is easy to miss, because nobody sees it happen. Saying it out loud is a good start.

Does this match how it feels to the three of you?

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. Pets and booking appointments were taken off the list: they don't happen in this house.

Fill in your own: Who does what? Quick look (spreadloveandacceptance.com/lemonade-stand)

04

Ownership: does each job have a name?

Each job gets two names: the owner, who does the job start to finish, and a backstop, who notices if it slipped and gently checks in (never a supervisor). It can be the same person, though a second name gives the job a gentle check. Count the jobs that have an owner, then divide by all the jobs on the

list. (The backstop is a good habit on top, but the count only needs the owner.) Leave jobs nobody owns on the list. They are the ones that matter most.

A *decision* you make together, like which school, can be marked “Both (decide together)”. It counts as owned, because a decision needs both voices. A job that needs doing gets one name.

For example: Two sisters care for their dad. Nobody owned his prescription, so each thought the other had ordered it.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Can we put a name next to this one, so it doesn’t fall between us?”

TRY THIS:

Find one job with no name, and give it an owner and a backstop today.



PROFESSOR PUDDLES

A job without a name tends to land on whoever notices first. Write one owner next to each job, and the guessing stops.

WORKPAPER WP-03

One owner per job · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-03

05

Stress: how full each stress tank is.

Each of you rates how full your own stress tank is with How much are you carrying? (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-02-how-much-are-you-carrying). A higher score means more stress. Under 0.30 is low, 0.30 up to 0.60 is moderate, and 0.60 or more is high. The score uses the average of your scores. But if either of you is at 0.60 or more, talk about that first, even when the score looks fine. A setup that only works when you’re both well rested isn’t one that can last, so more stress lowers the result.

For example: A grandmother raising two grandchildren scores 0.70. Her son, who helps at weekends, scores 0.35. Her 0.70 is the headline.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“My tank is high this week. Can we plan around that, not around the average?”

TRY THIS:

Each of you scores your own tank on the same day, before looking at the other's.

06

One number comes out, from 0 to 1.

0.70 or above: *working well*, the setup is holding. From 0.40 up to 0.70: *needs a look*, something is drifting, often who owns what. Below 0.40: *needs a rethink, together*. (The result is called the setup score. It looks like a probability, but it isn't one. It's a simple weighted sum.)

A **weighted sum** means each part counts for a set share: the hours count most, then the owners, then stress.

For example: Two friends who run a café score 0.55. Nothing is broken, but something is drifting.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“This number is about our setup, not about us.”

TRY THIS:

Write the date next to your number, so you can compare next month.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 4

Is the setup working for everyone?

Rosemary and Ken, retired, married 41 years

Is the setup working for everyone?

Person 1 (optional)

Rosemary

Person 2 (optional)

Ken

1. How the hours split

From Who did what or the “Who does what?” page: each person’s total hours for the week.

Rosemary, hours

14

Ken, hours

10

2. Does each job have a name?

From One owner per job.

Jobs on the list

12

Jobs with an owner

9

3. How much each person is carrying

Each person’s own score from How much are you carrying? Everyone fills in their own.

Rosemary, load (0 to 1)

0.45

Ken, load (0 to 1)

0.30

HOW THE SETUP IS WORKING

Working well

0.75 of 1. The setup is carrying its own weight.

Next: nothing in the setup needs changing this week. Keep the same rhythm of check-ins.

If you want to nudge it higher one day (optional, not urgent): hand about 2 hours a week from Rosemary to Ken, and balance would go from 0.83 to 1.00. Give one more job an owner (the person who does it and sees it through), and ownership would go from 0.75 to 0.83.

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. It scores the setup, never a person, and never the relationship as a whole.

Fill in your own: Is the setup working for everyone?

(spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/calculators/
is-the-setup-working-quick)

07

Start with the biggest shortfall.

The single number matters less than which of the three parts pulled it down most. In the middle band that is often ownership, which is why the calculator suggests One owner per job first. Once you've both seen it, what you do next is a choice you make together.

The **shortfall** is how far one part fell below the most it could add.

For example: Separated parents score 0.62. Their biggest gap: nobody owns school forms. They fix only that.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"Which part pulled the number down most? Let's start there."

TRY THIS:

Choose one small change, not five.

It judges the setup, never a person.

The number isn't a verdict on who's better or whether the relationship works. It's where a conversation starts, never how one ends. These tools only work when each person feels free to say no, to ask for a pause, or to keep their own notes private. If talking about the split ever feels unsafe, or one of you feels you can't say no, stop using the tools and talk with a trained counsellor on your own. When someone is afraid of their partner, counselling together isn't advised. Not safe at home? (spreadloveandacceptance.com/safety) lists free, private hotlines.

For example: One partner sees 0.35: "So I'm the problem." The other: "No. The bathroom has no owner, and you work nights."

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"Whatever this shows, I'm on your side."

TRY THIS:

Before you start, agree that either of you can say "pause" and come back later.

YOUR PART, AND ONLY YOUR PART. The score describes the setup you share, but your levers are your own: your jobs, your hours and what you agree to take on. You can propose a fix; you can't make the other person accept it. If the balance stays one-sided, step your load back towards your share on purpose, and say so kindly. Matching effort with effort protects your stress tank, and your tank is part of the score too. More in Part One: who you are today (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-2-now)

SUNDAY EVENING

Two week-long logs and two cups of tea. One list has 31 rows. The other has 18. Nobody says anything for a moment. Then one of you says, "I honestly didn't know about half of these."

Words this chapter uses

- **Log:** a simple list of the jobs you did this week and roughly how long each took.
- **Owner:** the person who does a job from start to finish, including remembering it.
- **Backstop:** the person who notices if a job slipped and gently checks in. A helper, never a boss.
- **Stress tank:** how much stress you are already carrying from the rest of life.
- **Setup:** the way you share the work right now. It can always be changed.
- **Setup score:** one number from 0 to 1 that sums up the three readings. It describes the setup, never a person.

Invisible jobs count too. Planning meals, remembering birthdays, booking the vet and noticing the soap is running low are all work, even though nobody sees them happen. Put them in your log.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I’d like to add the thinking jobs to our list, like remembering and planning. They take time too.”

Inside you, and between you

- **In you:** See your own share honestly, from what you wrote down rather than from memory. See the way you share work as a setup you can redesign, not a flaw in you.
- **Between you and others:** Put both people’s numbers on one page, and read the result as a note about the setup, never a verdict on a person. Clear owners leave less room for blame.

On your own: is your own load working?

This chapter asks whether a shared setup can last. You can ask the same about your own week: are you spending more energy than comes back in?

- Add up what you carry: jobs, people and worries.
- Set it beside what refills you: rest, help, and people who give back.
- If it runs in the red, change your side: drop, delay, ask or say no kindly. A limit is a statement about supply, not about your worth.

For example: After a breakup, Leanne has her kids every other week, and fills the quiet weeks with favours for friends. Writing it down showed her she never rests. More in *On my own* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/on-my-own).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I’d love to help, and I can’t this week. Can I let you know next week?”

TRY THIS:

Tonight, write three things that drained you this week and one thing that refilled you.

IN THE INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM:

Step 1: check your battery (spreadloveandacceptance.com/self-path) · Step 6: kind ways to say no · Part One: matching energy (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-2-now-in-depth) · The whole book on sharing the load (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/topic-share-the-load)

The fields behind this chapter

This chapter draws on 6 of the author’s thirteen fields (see the Preface or the About page). The first few:

- **Finance** (See the whole load): Like a small shop asking whether it can keep paying its bills, month after month. The chapter reads the setup that way, never as a verdict on the people.
- **Business** (Fix the setup, not the person): Ownership clarity: one owner per job, borrowed from project work, and the maker-and-checker habit from internal controls. Every regular job gets a person who does it and a backstop who notices if it slipped.

- **Neurobiology** (Read your state first): Leftover stress: a quick self-rating of the stress you're already carrying. It borrows the idea that stress builds up in the body, but it doesn't measure your body.
- **Economics** (See the whole load): Limited capacity and the safety margin.

Two fields, one idea: Business + Economics. Unowned work falls to whoever notices first, every time. That's what turns a fixable imbalance into a repeating one, so the check counts owners, not just the hours.

In real life

- **Partners:** After a new baby arrives, the hours tip heavily one way without anyone deciding it. The check can show it before resentment builds.
- **Family:** Two siblings share care for a parent. One lives nearby and does most of the visits. Writing down the hours helps them rebalance in other ways, like paperwork and phone calls.
- **Roommates:** Everyone agrees cleaning matters, but nobody owns the bathroom. The ownership score shows the gap straight away.
- **Coworkers:** Two people share one role. The same three questions still work: how the hours split, who owns what, and how stretched each person is.
- **Two dads:** With no old script for who does what, nothing was decided. One of them quietly took on all the school messages.
- **More than two partners:** In a home of three or more, "someone will do it" often means nobody does. Owners matter even more. See [More than two](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/more-than-two) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/more-than-two).
- **Foster and kinship carers:** Meetings, forms and contact visits are real work. See [Foster and kinship families](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/foster-and-kinship) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/foster-and-kinship).
- **Shift workers:** Hours can look even while sleep is not. See [Different hours](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/different-hours) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/different-hours).
- **When one of you is ill:** Share by energy, and agree an uneven split on purpose. See [When one of you is ill](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/when-one-is-ill) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/when-one-is-ill).

- **Dorm roommates:** A room agreement with names next to jobs settles most of it. See *Sharing a room* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/sharing-a-room).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I think the way we split things worked before, and life changed. Can we look at it again together?”

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 5

Our room agreement

Kayla and Bea, first-year roommates

Our room agreement

Your name	Their name
<i>Kayla</i>	<i>Bea</i>

Quiet hours

11 pm to 7 am on weeknights, midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. Headphones after that.

Guests (daytime)

Fine with a quick text first. Not during the other one's study or sleep time.

Overnight guests

Up to 2 nights a week, agreed the day before. A guest doesn't stay in the room when their host isn't there.

Cleaning

Kayla: floor and bins, Sunday. Bea: desk area and the fridge, Wednesday. Our own laundry, our own job.

Borrowing

Ask first, every time. Food on the shared shelf is for both of us.

Lights and alarms

Big light off by 11:30 on weeknights; a desk lamp is fine. One alarm, one snooze at most.

How we bring up problems

Text first if that's easier, then talk within a few days, one topic at a time. If we're stuck, we ask our RA to help.

YOUR AGREEMENT, READY TO SEND

Our room agreement (Kayla and Bea), with every line above, ending: “We’ll look at it again together in a month.”

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. They kept most of the site’s starting point and changed two lines.

Fill in your own: Our room agreement (spreadloveandacceptance.com/sharing-a-room)

Common mix-ups

- **“A low number means the relationship is failing.”** It only means the current setup needs changing. Setups change all the time.
- **“A high number means nobody can complain.”** A good score never silences anyone. If something feels wrong, say so.
- **“We can just guess the numbers.”** A guessed number is really just a feeling with a decimal point. Use your written logs.
- **“Taking unowned jobs off the list will help.”** It raises the number and changes nothing at home.
- **“One of us can fill it in for both.”** Each person writes their own log and scores their own stress tank.
- **“Fair means exactly 50/50.”** Fair is what you both agree to, with eyes open. An uneven split you chose together can be fair. Chapter IV covers the kinds of fair.
- **“The backstop checks up on the owner.”** No. The backstop only notices if something slipped, and asks kindly. It is help, not a check on someone.

Small children and a new baby

Small children bring a flood of new jobs, and most of them are thinking jobs: the nursery bag, the jabs, the party invites, the next size of clothes, the night

wakings. That's why the mental load (see the Preface (page 28)) often grows after a baby arrives, usually without anyone deciding it.

- **Log the kid jobs too**, with the thinking time. Nights count.
- **Hand over whole jobs, not tasks**: the clothes and sizes, the nursery bag, the GP and jabs. The new owner does the noticing too, in their own way.
- **Baby on the way?** Write your first job list together before the birth, plan the nights, and agree to look again at six weeks, three months, and before either of you goes back to work.
- **In the first weeks, share by energy, not hours**. Whoever was up in the night gets the rest; the other takes the morning.

For example (made up): Hollie and Gareth have Alfie, 3, and Poppy, 8 months. Gareth is a paramedic on shifts. Their logged minutes come out nearly even, but Hollie did almost three-quarters of the jobs nobody asked for. They don't move minutes. They move one whole job, the children's clothes, to Gareth.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"Could you own the nursery bag from now on, including noticing when we're low on nappies? I won't check it."

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 6

Who did what, with small children

Hollie and Gareth, parents of a toddler and a baby; Gareth works shifts

Who did what

Person A

Hollie

Person B

Gareth

Week beginning

12 October 2026

Part A: Who did what, this week

Day	Task noticed or done	Who did it	Minutes (rough)	How it came up: asked for, noticed, or thinking time?
Mon	Pack the nursery bag: spare clothes, nappies, named milk	Hollie	10	Noticed and handled
Tue	Book Poppy's one-year jabs at the GP	Hollie	15	Noticed and handled
Tue	Bath and bedtime, both children	Gareth	45	Asked for
Wed	Reply to a party invite and buy the present	Hollie	25	Noticed and handled
Wed	Sort outgrown clothes and order the next size	Hollie	40	Noticed and handled
Thu	Plan the week's meals around Gareth's nights	Hollie	20	Thinking and planning
Thu	Cook dinner and batch-cook for the weekend	Gareth	75	Noticed and handled
Fri	Remember the nursery photo money and form	Hollie	10	Thinking and planning

Day	Task noticed or done	Who did it	Minutes (rough)	How it came up: asked for, noticed, or thinking time?
Fri	Night wakings with Poppy	Hollie	60	Noticed and handled
Sat	Swimming lesson with Alfie	Gareth	60	Asked for
Sat	Big food shop and nappies	Both	80	Asked for
Sun	Washing for both children, to put away	Hollie	50	Noticed and handled
Sun	Fix the stair gate	Gareth	20	Noticed and handled
Sun	Update the family calendar and the childcare rota	Hollie	20	Thinking and planning

THIS WEEK'S TOTALS

Hollie

290 minutes (55%), of which 250 noticed and handled without being asked (50 of them thinking and planning)

Gareth

240 minutes (45%), of which 95 noticed and handled without being asked

Workload balance score

0.91. It describes how the logged work was split this week, not anyone in it.

Unasked-for work

Hollie did 72% of the work that was noticed and handled without anyone asking. This is the work that is easiest to miss. Say it out loud, and give the jobs that repeat a named owner.

Part B (optional): Kind ways to say no

Left blank this week.

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. Gareth worked three night shifts this week, so his rows are fewer; the minutes are close, and the noticing is

the part to talk about.

Fill in your own: Who did what (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/fill/wp-01)

If only one of you wants to try this

That is common, and you can still start. Log your own week and score your own tank. Then share one small thing you noticed, without asking the other person to agree with your numbers.

For example: A dad noticed he spent five hours a week driving his teenage son around. He just said so, and they agreed a bus pass for two days a week. See [Teens](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/teens) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/teens).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I tried writing down my week, just for me. Can I show you one thing I noticed?”

TRY THIS:

Share one finding, not the whole list. Then let it rest for a few days.

If the other person refuses to talk about the split at all, ever, or makes you feel afraid for raising it, that isn't a setup problem. Please read [Not safe at home?](#)

More for your situation

[Money together](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/money-together) · [Gaming and time together](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/gaming-and-time-together) · [Friends](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/friends) · [Family rifts](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/family-rifts) · [Grown-up children](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/grown-up-children) · [Grandparents](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/grandparents) · [Co-parenting](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/co-parenting) · [Coming home](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/coming-home) · [Empty nest](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/empty-nest) · [At work](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/work) · [For counsellors](#) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/for-counselors)

TRY THIS:

Each of you logs one week in Who did what (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-01), first. The number only means something if you each wrote your own.

Next, fill in the job list in One owner per job together, including any jobs nobody owns yet.

Then each of you scores how full your own stress tank is in How much are you carrying? on the same day.

Put the three numbers into the calculator. Look first at the biggest shortfall, pick one small change together, and check again in a month.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ✓ **Look at the month, not last night.** Use what you both wrote down, not memory.
- ✓ **Three things go in:** balance (how the hours split), ownership (does each job have a name?) and stress (how full each tank is).
- ✓ **One number comes out, from 0 to 1.** Start with whichever part pulled it down most.
- ✓ **It judges the setup, never a person.** It's where a talk starts, not how one ends.

THIS CONNECTS TO

Preface to Part Two · The work nobody sees page 18
The unseen work the check counts

Part Two · Chapter III · Full tanks and different angles page 76
The stress input, explained

Part Three · Chapter 6 · Habits and change read online
Fixing the setup with small, kind changes

Part Three · Chapter 12 · Helping others well read online
When one person carries the care

PUT IT TO USE



**Six-week program, week 2:
give every job one owner**
[spreadloveandacceptance.com/
prog-01](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/prog-01)



One owner per job
[spreadloveandacceptance.com/
workpapers/
wp-03-one-owner-per-job](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-03-one-owner-per-job)

III

PART TWO • CHAPTER III

Full tanks and different angles: stress and perspective

Why some reactions are bigger than what caused them, and why two people can see the same moment so differently.

IN THIS CHAPTER

1. A full tank overflows
2. Some stress is left over from earlier
3. Check your stress tank in a minute
4. Three everyday states
5. There are seven angles on the same moment
6. Both views can be true
7. Say it instead of making each other guess
8. A full tank means “later,” not “never.”
9. Words this chapter uses
10. Inside you, and between you
11. On your own: reading your own tank
12. The fields behind this chapter
13. In real life
14. Common mix-ups
15. Two homes: co-parenting after a split
16. If only one of you wants to try this
17. More for your situation

IN SHORT:

- **A full tank overflows.** Stress left over from earlier makes small things feel big.
- **Check your tank in a minute,** and say the tank out loud instead of making others guess.
- **Two people can see one moment from different angles,** and both views can be true.
- **A full tank means “later,” not “never”:** pause, name a time, and come back.

THURSDAY, 5:15PM

They ask, perfectly pleasantly, whether you remembered to call the dentist. Your reaction is much bigger than the question deserved, and you can hear it happening while it happens.

01

A full tank overflows.

If you're already tired, stretched or stressed from somewhere else, a small question can get a big reaction. That's human. Anything decided in that moment is worth coming back to once you've both calmed down.

For example: A nurse gets home after a night shift. Her housemate asks, "Did you see my message?" She snaps. It wasn't the message. It was twelve hours on her feet.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"Sorry. That was bigger than the question. I'm running on empty."

TRY THIS:

Notice one moment this week when your reaction was bigger than its cause.

02

Some stress is left over from earlier.

Ask yourself: how much of this feeling is about the thing in front of me, and how much did I bring in with me? "I'm upset about the dishes" and "I'm exhausted, and the dishes are what I noticed" are different problems.

Some of what we bring in is much older: an understanding from growing up, like "whoever notices the mess has to clean it." If a feeling seems a lot older than the moment, Where your lens came from (spreadloveandacceptance.com/growing-up) helps you find where it started.

For example: A teenager has a hard day at school, comes home, and explodes because a brother took the phone charger. The charger is the last drop, not the whole tank.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I think I brought this in with me. Give me ten minutes."

TRY THIS:

Before you react, ask: "How much of this is from earlier?"



PROFESSOR PUDDLES

Before a hard talk, check how full your own tank is. Five quick questions, about two minutes, and you'll know whether now is the time.

WORKPAPER WP-02 How much are you carrying? ·

spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-02

03

Check your stress tank in a minute.

How much are you carrying? measures how full your stress tank is. A higher score means more stress in the tank. Score five things from 0 to 4: sleep, work elsewhere, any unsettled argument, how your body feels, and time pressure today. Add them up and divide by 20. Under 0.30 is low. From 0.30 up to 0.60 is moderate. 0.60 or more is high. If it has been high for a long time, it can start to feel normal, so a quick reading each week is worth it.

For example: A man caring for his wife after surgery scores 0.65 three days in a row. That tells him he needs help, not more effort.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

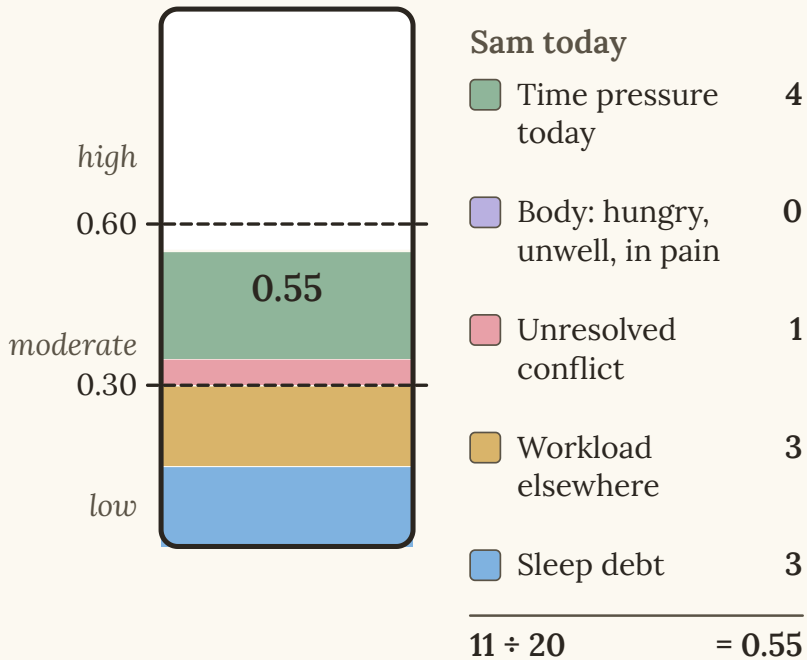
"I checked my tank. I'm in the high band today."

TRY THIS:

Score yourself tomorrow morning, before you look at your phone.

How full is your stress tank?

Score five things from 0 to 4. Add them up, divide by 20.



Moderate: say it before a hard talk.

“Heads up, I’m carrying more than usual today.”

Made-up example from this chapter. The five items and bands are this book’s, not a tested questionnaire.

FIGURE 8 How full is your stress tank? Five things scored 0 to 4, added up and divided by 20. Made-up example; the items and bands are this book’s.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 7

How much are you carrying?

Rosa, who shares her mum's care with her brother

How much are you carrying?

Fill this in on your own, about yourself only. Never fill it in for someone else.

Your name

Rosa

Date

7 October 2026

The checklist

0 = Not at all · 4 = Very true

Sleep debt (less rested than usual)

0 1 2 **3** 4

Workload elsewhere (job, school, caregiving)

0 1 2 3 **4**

Recent unresolved conflict (any source)

0 **1** 2 3 4

Physical state (hungry, sick, in pain)

0 1 **2** 3 4

Time pressure today specifically

0 1 2 **3** 4

YOUR LOAD SCORE

Your load today

High load (13 out of 20 points)

What to do

Put off anything that doesn't need deciding in the next hour. If you need to settle first, the Calm-Down Kit is made for this.

If it can't wait

If what you're carrying can't wait, like caring for someone who is ill, that's a sign to get more help, not to try harder: ask one person for one specific thing this week, and look into respite care.

Filled most by

sleep debt, workload elsewhere, time pressure today. Conditions, not character.

Load score

0.65 out of 1.00

Optional

☒ Some of what I'm carrying is caring for someone

Anything you want to name before talking

Mum's hospital appointment moved to Thursday, and I'm the one driving.

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. Higher means more load. Rosa scores only herself; her brother fills in his own.

Fill in your own: How much are you carrying?

(spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/fill/wp-02)

04

Three everyday states.

Calm and connected. Revved up. Running on empty. Knowing which one you're in tells you whether now is a good time to talk. The Nervous System Ladder (spreadloveandacceptance.com/quick-checks), a thirty-second self-check, helps you make a best guess. These labels come from polyvagal

theory, whose main claims are still debated by scientists. Here they are only everyday words, not a medical model.

For example: In a long-distance couple, one partner takes the video call at midnight his time. He is often running on empty. They move the hard talks to weekend mornings.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I’m revved up right now. Can we talk after a walk?”

TRY THIS:

Find one body clue for each state, like a tight jaw for “revved up.”

05

There are seven angles on the same moment.

Tiredness, time pressure, history, what home was like growing up, your sense of fairness, how you communicate, and stress from outside. Many arguments are two people looking from different angles, each sure the other sees what they see. The “See their side” step of Rewind the talk (spreadloveandacceptance.com/perspective-shifter), built on these seven angles, helps you picture how the same moment might look from the other side, with questions to ask instead of guesses.

For example: Planning the holidays, one parent sees it from family habit (“We always go to my mum’s”). The other sees it from fairness (“We went to yours last year”).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

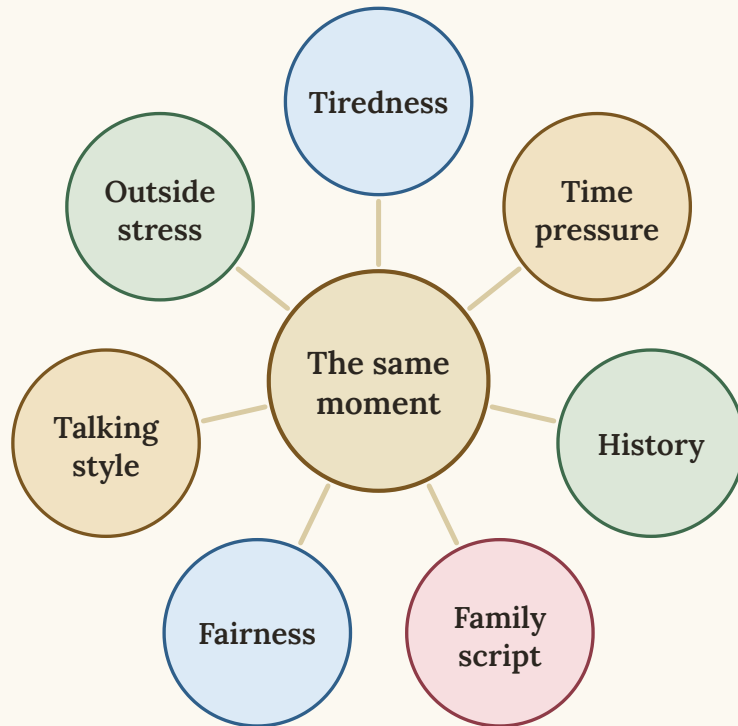
“Which angle are you seeing this from?”

TRY THIS:

Guess which of the seven angles you look from most often.

Seven angles on the same moment

Which one are you looking from right now?



An angle is a place to stand, not a verdict.

Name your own. Ask about theirs.

Illustration. The seven angles are this book's; the Rewind the talk's "See their side" uses them.

FIGURE 9 Seven angles on the same moment. An angle is a place to stand, not a verdict: name your own, and ask about theirs.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 8

Rewind the talk: see their side

Hana, about her friend Lou

See their side

1. What happened?

I asked Lou if she was still coming to my birthday dinner, and she just replied "maybe".

2. Who are they to you?

Partner Family Roommate **Friend** Coworker Co-parent
My teen or child Someone else

3. What state might they have been in?

Calm and connected Revved up **Running on empty** I'm not sure

4. What might have been going on around them?

A long or hard day **Little sleep** Rushed or late Money worries
Caring for someone Not feeling their best A noisy or crowded place
Other people were there **It was a text or message** It was late at night

5. How are they wired?

They notice tone a lot They take words literally **They need time to process**
They think out loud They're very direct They hint rather than say
They like a plan Noise, light or crowds get to them
Their language or culture differs

6. What history might they carry?

This has come up before They grew up with it done differently
It's a sore topic for them They may feel it's unfair

7. What could each of you see? They may have seen or known things you didn't

their whole day and workload **a message, call or news you didn't see**
something they had already planned or done how it looked from where they stood
a promise someone else made them how they were feeling inside

You may have seen or known things they didn't

the planning you had already done *the reason behind your timing*

what you actually meant how tired or stretched you were the part already done
a deadline only you knew about

Neither of you could fully see

each other's tone, in writing what was going on in the other's head

what would happen next what other people had said to each of you

THROUGH THEIR EYES

Running on empty: If they were running on empty, short replies and slow answers are what a tired body does. It can look like not caring when it's only having nothing left.

Caring for someone: Caring for someone else uses up attention you can't see. They may have had less to give than usual.

Questions to check, instead of guessing: "How was your day, before this came up?" "Would it help to think about it and come back to it later?"

A sentence to bridge the gap: "I think we may have been seeing this from different places. On my side, I knew about the reason behind my timing, and I'm not sure that came across. I'm wondering whether, for you, you were running on empty. Could we compare notes? I'd like to understand how it looked to you."

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. These are possibilities to check, not facts about Lou.

Fill in your own: Rewind the talk: see their side
(spreadloveandacceptance.com/perspective-shifter)

06

Both views can be true.

You can each be right about what you see and still be looking at different parts of the same thing. The question isn't "Who's right?" but "Which angle are you seeing this from?"

For example: Two adult brothers argue about their late mother's house. One sees memories. The other sees bills. Both are real.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"You're right about what you see. Can I tell you what I see?"

TRY THIS:

Say the other person's view back to them before you give yours.

07

Say it instead of making each other guess.

Before a hard conversation, each of you says how full your stress tank is and which angle you're seeing things from. It works best before you start, not in the middle.

For example: Two coworkers start a tense meeting with one sentence each about their tank and angle. The meeting is shorter, and calmer.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"Before we start: I'm about half full today, and I'm seeing this from the time angle."

TRY THIS:

Use that one-line opener once this week.



TIDBIT

Tidbit's tip: say your number out loud, like "I'm a seven today." It's quick, and nobody has to guess!

TOOL My weather today · spreadloveandacceptance.com/quick-checks

08

A full tank means "later," not "never."

A high score is a reason to pause, never a way out of the talk. Say when you'll come back, and the Calm-Down Kit (spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-11) can help in the meantime. After your calming steps, check your tank again. Under 0.50, go back at the time you said. From 0.50 to 0.59, if you still feel

hot, take another round. Still 0.60 or more after two rounds? That's okay. Pick a new time, and say when.

For example: A dad and his 14-year-old get heated about phone time. He says, "I'm too wound up. Let's talk at seven." At seven, he knocks on her door.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I need a break. I'll come back at seven. I promise."

TRY THIS:

Whenever you pause, name the time you'll come back.

YOUR PART, AND ONLY YOUR PART. Your stress tank is the only one you can empty. You can't calm someone else's tank for them, and pouring yours into theirs leaves two empty tanks. Protect yours: rest, say "later," and give energy where it's met. When both tanks are full, the kindest thing you control is the timing. More in Part One: who you are today (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-2-now)

MONDAY MORNING

You both look at the same pile of mail on the table. One of you sees a to-do list. The other sees proof that nobody else ever opens the mail. Same pile. Two different pictures.

Words this chapter uses

- **Stress tank:** how much stress you are already carrying, before this moment even starts.
- **Leftover stress:** the part of a feeling you brought in from somewhere else, like poor sleep or a hard day.
- **This-moment stress:** the part caused by what is in front of you right now.

- **Angle:** the point of view you are seeing a moment from, like tiredness or fairness.
- **How much are you carrying?:** a free one-minute worksheet that scores your stress tank.
- **Calm-Down Kit:** a short plan for stepping away well and coming back.

Inside you, and between you

- **In you:** Know how full your stress tank is, and which angle you are seeing from, before you judge a moment.
- **Between you and others:** Choose the timing, pause and come back. Your state shapes how the other person's words land, so say it out loud, and ask which angle they are seeing from.

On your own: reading your own tank

A full tank makes small things feel big. On your own, the most useful habit is a one-minute reading of your battery before you react.

- Check your battery for a few mornings in a row and look for a pattern.
- Before a hard moment, ask yourself how much of this is leftover from earlier.
- Decide on a calm day what settles you, so it's ready when you need it.

For example: Living alone after a breakup, Bryony noticed she snapped at her sister every Monday. Her mornings showed why: Sunday nights were her worst sleep of the week. See *On my own* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/on-my-own).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"Mondays are hard for me. Can we talk on Tuesday instead?"

IN THE INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM:

Step 1: check your battery (spreadloveandacceptance.com/self-path) · Step 4: plan what settles you · Part One: what settles you (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-2-now-in-depth) · The whole book on staying calm (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/topic-calm)

The fields behind this chapter

This chapter draws on 6 of the author's thirteen fields (see the Preface (page 18) or the About page (spreadloveandacceptance.com/about)):

- **Neurobiology** (Read your state first): The autonomic nervous system runs stress and rest without asking you.
- **Psychology** (Tune how you send and receive): Leftover stress versus this-moment stress, family scripts and communication styles: the angles you see a moment from.
- **Philosophy** (Tune how you send and receive): Two true views of the same thing (the Blind Men and the Elephant), and the Second Arrow: what happened is the first arrow, and the story we add is the second.
- **Holistic therapies** (Read your state first): Body first, argument second.
- **Behavioural science** (Read your state first): Say it before the talk, with a named time to come back. Practise small routines on calm days.
- **Economics** (See the whole load): A tank that's nearly full has no room to spare.

Two fields, one idea: Philosophy + Neurobiology. What happened is the first arrow. The story we add is the second. A full stress tank makes that second arrow easier to add, so say your tank and your angle out loud first.

In real life

- **Partners:** After a bad night's sleep, "What's for dinner?" sounds like "Why haven't you taken care of dinner?"
- **Family:** A parent asks about your job search. They see it from the angle of worry. You see it from the angle of an old pattern: "They've never trusted me."

- **Roommates:** Loud music at 11pm. One roommate sees it as a fairness issue. The other grew up in a noisy house and honestly didn't notice.
- **Coworkers:** A late-night email. The sender was clearing their inbox. The reader, who is already stretched, feels pressure to answer right away.
- **Two mums:** One comes home from a hard shift to a toddler's meltdown. Her "I can't do this" is about the shift, not the toddler or her wife. See *Different hours* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/different-hours).
- **More than two partners:** In a home of three, a check-in round where everyone says their tank first stops two people guessing about the third. See *More than two* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/more-than-two).
- **Foster and kinship carers:** After a contact visit, a child's tank is often full. A slammed door that evening may be about the visit, not the carer. See *Foster and kinship families* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/foster-and-kinship).
- **A child with ADHD:** The end of a school day can leave the tank brim full. Big talks go better after food and rest. See *When a child has ADHD* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/adhd-kids).
- **Two faiths:** A festival can mean joy to one partner and pressure to the other. Same day, two angles. See *Two faiths, one family* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/two-faiths).
- **Coming out:** A parent's silence may be shock, not rejection. Your own tank may be full for weeks afterwards. See *Coming out* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/coming-out).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I think my tank was full before you walked in. Can we start again?"

Common mix-ups

- **“A big reaction means it was a big deal.”** Sometimes. Often it means the tank was already full.
- **“A high score is an excuse.”** It’s a note to come back later, not a pass to skip the talk.
- **“I can tell how full their tank is.”** Only they can say. Each person scores only themselves.
- **“Pausing is the same as the silent treatment.”** A pause has a time to come back. The silent treatment doesn’t. Always say when.
- **“If we see it differently, one of us is wrong.”** You may just be standing at different angles.
- **“Naming my angle means giving up my point.”** It just helps the other person see where your point is coming from.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I don’t think you’re wrong. I think we’re standing in different places. Can we swap for a minute?”

Two homes: co-parenting after a split

Children carry two homes, and changeover day fills their tank. Being quiet, clingy or cross for a few hours after a handover is common. It usually isn’t a sign that something is wrong at the other home.

- **Landing time:** a snack, something familiar, and no questions about the other home for the first hour.
- **The child is never the messenger.** Adult news goes adult to adult.
- **Money:** follow any formal arrangement. Split the extras by a ratio you agree, keep one list, and settle up once a month.
- **With an ex, share the band, not the story:** “I’m in a heavy week. Could we swap Wednesday?” Your private life stays yours.
- **An ex who won’t cooperate but isn’t dangerous:** try parallel parenting. Written messages only, short and business-like, handovers at school,

and your own list for your own home.

- **New partners:** the parent stays the owner of anything involving the other home. A step-parent starts as a friendly adult, not the one who tells the children off.

For example (made up): Harriet gives Freya, 8, and Arlo, 5, an hour of toast and blankets when they come back from their dad's. She stopped asking "What happened at Dad's?" at the door. Sunday evenings got calmer.

WORDS YOU COULD USE (A BUSINESS-LIKE MESSAGE):

"Hi Dylan. Freya's school trip is on 6 November and costs £24. I've paid it and put it on the extras list. Thanks, Harriet."

If you are afraid of your ex, a shared plan isn't the right tool: see *Not safe at home?* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/safety)

If only one of you wants to try this

You can do all of this on your own side. Check your own tank. Name your own angle. Pause and come back on time. The other person doesn't have to use the words for it to help. Often, when one person starts saying it out loud, the other starts to as well.

For example: A daughter visits her dad every Sunday, and every week they clash over his health. She starts each visit with "I'm a bit tired today, so if I go quiet, it's not you." He never scores anything. The visits still get calmer.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I've been trying something. I just tell you how my day was before we talk about the hard stuff."

TRY THIS:

Start your next hard talk with one sentence about your own tank, and nothing about theirs.

A note on safety: A full tank explains a reaction. It never excuses shouting, threats or hurting anyone. If someone's "stress" often turns into fear for you, that isn't a tank problem. These tools only work when each person feels free to say no, to ask for a pause, or to keep their own notes private. If sharing how you feel ever feels unsafe, or one of you feels you can't say no, stop using the tools and talk with a trained counsellor on your own. When someone is afraid of their partner, counselling together isn't advised. Not safe at home? lists free, private hotlines.

More for your situation

Friends (spreadloveandacceptance.com/friends) · Grown-up children (spreadloveandacceptance.com/grown-up-children) · Family rifts (spreadloveandacceptance.com/family-rifts) · Co-parenting (spreadloveandacceptance.com/co-parenting) · Coming home (spreadloveandacceptance.com/coming-home) · When one of you is ill (spreadloveandacceptance.com/when-one-is-ill) · Long distance (spreadloveandacceptance.com/long-distance) · Sharing a room (spreadloveandacceptance.com/sharing-a-room) · Gaming and time together (spreadloveandacceptance.com/gaming-and-time-together) · For counsellors (spreadloveandacceptance.com/for-counselors)

TRY THIS:

Before your next hard conversation, check how full your own tank is.

Score the five things in How much are you carrying?, add them up and divide by 20.

Then say one sentence out loud, such as: "My stress tank's about half full today, and I'm mostly seeing this from the time-pressure angle."

If either of you scores 0.60 or more, put off anything that doesn't need deciding in the next hour. Agree on a time to come back, and keep it.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ✓ **A full tank overflows.** Stress left over from earlier makes small things feel big.
- ✓ **Check your tank in a minute,** and say the band out loud instead of making others guess.
- ✓ **Two people can see one moment from different angles,** and both views can be true.
- ✓ **A full tank means “later,” not “never”:** pause, name a time, and come back.

THIS CONNECTS TO

Part Three · Chapter 2 · Stress and the nervous system

The ladder, flooding and rest

[read online](#)

Part Three · Chapter 3 · How we see each other

The angles and stories behind a reaction

[read online](#)

Part Three · Chapter 13 · Anger

What to do in the hot minutes

[read online](#)

Part One · Now · Your wiring, weather and words

Checking your own weather first

[read online](#)

PUT IT TO USE



Six-week program, week 3: notice how much each of you is carrying

spreadloveandacceptance.com/prog-01



How much are you carrying?

spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-02-how-much-are-you-carrying

IV

PART TWO • CHAPTER IV

Two kinds of fair: equal vs fair at home

Agree on what “fair” means before you argue about it, and give a comment a moment to land before you answer it.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. There are two kinds of fair | 10. Inside you, and between you |
| 2. Fair by results | 11. On your own: your own kind of fair |
| 3. Fair by promises | 12. The fields behind this chapter |
| 4. Once a job has an owner, look to the owner | 13. In real life |
| 5. Covering is kind. Say it out loud | 14. Common mix-ups |
| 6. Let a comment land before you react | 15. Money between you |
| 7. Notice, name, decide | 16. A couple and a housemate |
| 8. Keep the two questions apart | 17. More for your situation |
| 9. Each idea in everyday life | 18. A note on safety |

IN SHORT:

- **There are two kinds of fair:** by results (did it all get done?) and by promises (did each of us do what we agreed?). Agree which one you're using.
- **Once a job has an owner, look to the owner.** Covering for someone is kind when you say it out loud.
- **Let a comment land before you react:** notice it, name it, then decide what to say.
- **Keep the two questions apart:** “Was the job done?” is about a fact; “Did that comment hurt?” is about a feeling.

THE SAME ARGUMENT, TWICE A MONTH

One of you counts hours. The other counts who noticed the job needed doing. You're both counting honestly, in two different currencies, and then arguing about the exchange rate.

01

There are two kinds of fair.

“Did everything get done?” and “Did each of us do what we said we’d do?” Both are reasonable. Friction starts when each of you is using a different one without realising.

02

Fair by results.

This kind judges by outcomes: did the right things get done, by whoever had the time or energy? It's flexible and easy-going. Done carefully, it counts the cost to whoever covered, but done carelessly, it can hide who is always stepping in.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 9

Who does what? The Money tab
Grace and Ruth, a couple with different incomes

Money (optional)

One line per cost. Put what each person actually paid.

Currency
£ (pounds)

Bill	Grace paid (£)	Ruth paid (£)	How it's shared
Rent	1,100	700	Shared, split
Power and water	160	0	Shared, split
Internet and phones	0	90	Shared, split
Groceries	300	250	Shared, split

	Grace brings in (£)	Ruth brings in (£)	How it's shared
Pay	4,200	2,800	Money coming in

THE SUMMARY

Each person's total: Grace £1,560; Ruth £1,040.

Coming in: £7,000 (Grace £4,200, Ruth £2,800). After shared bills: £4,400 left.

Two ways to split the shared bills. Split evenly: Ruth would put in £260 more · Split by income (60/40): it already comes out even. Pick whichever feels fair to you.

Even isn't always the fair answer (incomes and rooms differ), so treat this as a starting point, not a verdict.

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. Money is a fair topic only where nobody controls the other's money.

Fill in your own: Who does what? (Money tab)
(spreadloveandacceptance.com/lemonade-stand)

03

Fair by promises.

This kind asks whether each person did the jobs they agreed to own. It's clear and steady, but it can feel rigid in a week when life gets in the way.

04

Once a job has an owner, look to the owner.

The owner is the person who does the job, start to finish. A second name on the list is a backstop who notices if it slipped and gently checks in, never a supervisor. (It can be the same person.) If it's your job, the question is whether you did it, not whether someone else quietly covered for you. That protects the person who keeps filling the gaps.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 10

One owner per job

Dee and Mark, foster carers

One owner per job: caring for a child in care

Person A

Dee

Person B

Mark

Date of this list

4 October 2026

The split you agreed (optional)

Dee works three days; Mark works full time

Who owns each job

Job	How often	Roughly how long?	Owner	Helper or backup	Notes
Social worker visits	Monthly	1.5	Dee	Mark	Mark joins by video when he can
Reviews and meetings	As needed	2	Dee	Mark	Dee books and preps; Mark comes to the big ones
Daily log and placement paperwork	Daily	0.5	Dee	Mark	Mark writes it on Dee's work days
Contact visits and calls with their family	Weekly	1.5	Mark	Dee	Saturday mornings
School liaison (designated teacher, plans)	As needed	1	Dee		
Being there after contact	As needed	1	Mark	Dee	Quiet tea, no questions
Health and therapy appointments	As needed	1.5	Dee		

Job	How often	Roughly how long?	Owner	Helper or backup	Notes
Training and support group	Monthly	2	Mark		Mark's turn this term

DOES EVERY JOB HAVE AN OWNER?

Jobs with an owner

8 of 8. Every job has an owner.

How the jobs are spread

Counted by how often each job comes round, and by size or time where you gave it: Dee 61% · Mark 39%. You wrote down the split you agreed: "Dee works three days; Mark works full time". Does this match it? It's a starting point for a talk, not a scorecard.

☒ We're agreed on this

Who agreed (optional)

Dee and Mark

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. "Being there after contact" is on the list because hidden work counts.

Fill in your own: One owner per job (caring for a child in care)
(spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/fill/wp-03)

05

Covering is kind. Say it out loud.

Helping out when the owner can't is lovely. Just mention it, so the help is seen: "I put the bins out this week, since you were away." Help that stays silent turns into unseen work, and unseen help slowly becomes expected (see Complacency (spreadloveandacceptance.com/complacency)).



SUGARFOOT

Sugarfoot's tip: covering for someone is kind. Say it out loud, gently, and ask for what you'd like next time, so it doesn't turn into quiet resentment.

TOOL

Chat analyzer: Help me write it (ask for a change) ·

spreadloveandacceptance.com/small-wins

Let a comment land before you react.

When a remark hits harder than it should, say “Give me a second.” The idea is borrowed loosely from brain science, where the brain turns down sounds and sensations automatically, in a fraction of a second. This book’s pause is different: a few seconds you choose to take on purpose. Let the spike pass, then decide whether it needs an answer now, later or not at all.

Notice, name, decide.

Notice it landed hard. Name it kindly: “That hit harder than you probably meant.” Then, once you’ve settled, decide how to reply. Say it so it lands (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-09-say-it-so-it-lands) helps with the words.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 11

Say it so it lands

Carla, who runs a café with her business partner Femi

Say it so it lands

Your name

Carla

Date

8 October 2026

Before you speak or send: fact, feeling, ask

Use it on one thing that actually stung.

Raw reaction

Great, so I'm doing the stock order on my own again.

What's the fact underneath this? (One sentence, no adjectives.)

The stock order for the café wasn't placed by Tuesday noon, and I placed it at 4.

What's the feeling underneath this? (Frustrated, tired, unseen, rushed...)

I felt stretched thin, and a bit alone with it.

What's the actual ask? (What do you want to happen next, specifically?)

Could you own the Tuesday stock order from next week, with me as backup when you're at the bank?

Before you react: four quick checks

Is this about a specific, nameable task or event?

☒ Yes No

Would I read this the same way if I weren't already carrying a lot?

Yes No ☒ Not sure

Is there a neutral interpretation that also fits what was said?

☒ Yes No

Am I responding to their words, or to a pattern from a past conversation?

☒ Their words A past pattern

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Ways to say it

Quick one, no rush: could you own the Tuesday stock order from next week, with me as backup when you're at the bank?

Suggestions

Your own load is part of how this reads. A few hours, or a night's sleep, often changes how it reads. There's a kinder reading that also fits. Try asking about it first: "Did you mean ____, or ____?"

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. The raw reaction stays on the sheet, not in the message.

Fill in your own: Say it so it lands (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/fill/wp-09)

08

Keep the two questions apart.

"Was the job done?" is a question about a fact. "Did that comment hurt?" is a question about a feeling. Both matter. Answer them one at a time, not in the same argument.

Each idea in everyday life

The sections above say what each idea means. Here each one gets a real-life example, words you could say, and one small step.

1. Two kinds of fair

For example: Nisha and Kezia share a dorm room. Nisha thinks it's fair if the room is tidy by Friday, whoever tidies. Kezia thinks it's fair if each keeps their own half clean. See *Sharing a room* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/sharing-a-room).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"When you say fair, do you mean it all gets done, or that we each do our bit?"

TRY THIS:

Each finish this sentence, then compare: "To me, a fair week is one where..."

Two kinds of fair

Both are reasonable. Trouble starts when you use different ones without saying so.

Fair by results

Asks: Did it all get done?

Guards: Will the home keep running?

Good: flexible. Watch: it can hide who always steps in.

Bins



Dentist



Forms



Fair by promises

Asks: Did each of us do what we agreed?

Guards: Can I rely on you?

Good: clear. Watch: it can feel rigid in a hard week.

Bins · Sam



Dentist · Maya



Forms · Lin



The agreement: look to the owner

Bins · owner: Sam

second name: Alex, who notices and asks once

Once a job has a named owner, judge it by whether the owner did their part (swapping or asking ahead counts), not by whether someone quietly covered. Made-up examples.

FIGURE 10 Two kinds of fair. Both are reasonable; trouble starts when people use different ones without saying so. Once a job has an owner, look to the owner.

2. Fair by results

For example: A grandmother is raising her grandchildren. Her grown-up son helps “wherever it’s needed” when he’s home. The house runs, but she

is always the one who notices what's needed. See Kinship families (spreadloveandacceptance.com/foster-and-kinship).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I like that we're flexible. Can we also check who ends up stepping in most?"

TRY THIS:

For one week, mark every job you picked up that wasn't planned.

3. Fair by promises

For example: Two business partners run a café. One owns the ordering, the other the staff rota. When the rota is late, they ask the rota owner, not "the team."

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"It's my job, and I can't do it this week. Could you take it, and I'll take the bins?"

TRY THIS:

Name one job that is "sort of everyone's." Agree who owns it for a month.

4. Look to the owner

For example: In a stepfamily, the 13-year-old owns feeding the dog, and his stepmum is the second name. At 7pm the bowl is empty. She says, "Dog's dinner?" once. She doesn't do it for him, and she doesn't lecture.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"This one's yours, start to finish. I'll only remind you if it slips."

TRY THIS:

Pick one job that causes friction and write two names next to it.

5. Covering out loud

For example: Two grown-up sisters take turns driving their dad to appointments. When one covers, she texts: “I took Dad Thursday since you had the late shift. Just so you know.”

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Thank you for covering that. How was it for you?”

TRY THIS:

Next time you cover a job, mention it in one plain sentence, the same day.

6. Let a comment land

For example: A nurse comes home from a night shift. Her husband says, “Oh, you’re up.” She hears “at last,” but says, “Give me a second, I’m very tired.” He meant he was glad to see her. See [Different hours](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/different-hours) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/different-hours).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“That landed hard. Let me think before I answer.”

TRY THIS:

Agree on your “give me a second” phrase today, on a calm day.



PROFESSOR PUDDLES

When a comment stings, give it a minute to land before you answer. This workpaper is a short check for your reply.

WORKPAPER WP-09 Say it so it lands · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-09

7. Notice, name, decide

For example: A teenager tells her dad, “You never listen.” He feels his chest tighten (notice). He says, “That stings, and I want to hear you properly” (name). He decides it needs a real talk tomorrow (decide). See [Teens](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/teens) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/teens).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I want to answer that, just not this minute. Can we talk at eight?”

TRY THIS:

Put the three words somewhere you'll see them, like the fridge.

Let a comment land

Timing, not hiding: let the spike pass before you decide.

- 1 Notice**
It landed harder than its words. Hot face, tight chest, a sharp breath.



- 2 Name it out loud**
“I heard that as bigger than it probably was. Give me a second.”



- 3 Decide, once settled**
Reply now, later, or not at all. Could a kinder meaning fit?

Keep the two questions apart

“Was this job done?”

A fact.

Check the job list and its owner.

“Did that land as an attack?”

A reaction.

Check your own state first.

Naming a feeling (affect labelling) and looking for another meaning (reappraisal) both have some research behind them.

FIGURE 11 Let a comment land before you react: notice, name, decide. And keep the fact question apart from the feeling question.

8. Keep the two questions apart

For example: Separated parents share the kids across two homes. The bag came back without the school shoes (a fact). The text about it felt cold (a

feeling). They sort the shoes first. See Co-parenting (spreadloveandacceptance.com/co-parenting).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Can we sort the shoes first, and come back to how that text felt?”

TRY THIS:

When a talk tangles, ask, “Fact or feeling?” and finish one first.

YOUR PART, AND ONLY YOUR PART. You control whether, when and how you bring something up, and whether you cover a job out loud. How the other person responds is theirs. If you cover again and again with no thanks and no change, match the energy: cover less, and say so kindly. Fair by promises only works when both people keep theirs. More in Part One: who you are today (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-2-now)

THE WEEKLY CATCH-UP

Sam and Alex share a home. Alex owns the bins, but Alex works late on Tuesdays, and Sam has quietly taken it out three weeks running. At the catch-up, Sam mentions it. Alex says Tuesday nights aren't realistic with the late shifts. They agree to try a swap for the rest of the month: Sam takes the bins, and Alex takes the recycling and the weekly grocery order. They'll settle it at the monthly look-back in Chapter V (page 116).

WEDNESDAY, 7PM

“Thanks for doing the dishes,” one of you says, a little flatly. It was meant as a thank-you. It sounded like a criticism. Before you know it, you've replied to the criticism, and now there really is one.

Inside you, and between you

- **In you:** Notice which kind of fair comes naturally to you, and notice the quiet habit of covering for others without saying so. When a comment stings, check your own state before you answer.
- **Between you and others:** Give each job one clear owner instead of blaming. Watch how unowned jobs slide towards one person, and keep things steady by mentioning help out loud and saying thank you.

On your own: your own kind of fair

Fair starts with knowing what fair means to you, and which jobs are truly yours.

- Write down what fair means to you, in one sentence.
- List the jobs you own, and the ones you picked up without ever agreeing.
- Practise letting a comment land before you answer, then reply with a fact, a feeling and an ask.

For example: Olu lives alone and has his kids every other weekend. His line: “Fair is not doing their jobs just because I miss them.” See On my own (spreadloveandacceptance.com/on-my-own).

TRY THIS:

Pick one job you took on without agreeing. Keep it on purpose, or raise it on a calm day.

IN THE INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM:

Step 5: find words for what you feel (spreadloveandacceptance.com/self-path) · Step 6: kind ways to say no · Part One: where your sense of fair came from (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-1-then) · The whole book on sharing the load (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/topic-share-the-load)

The fields behind this chapter

This chapter draws on 6 of the author's thirteen fields (see the Preface (page 18) or the About page (spreadloveandacceptance.com/about)).

- **Philosophy** (Fix the setup, not the person): Two old ideas behind fairness: judging by outcomes (consequentialist) and judging by promises (deontological).
- **Business** (Fix the setup, not the person): Look to the owner.
- **Economics** (Notice the quiet incentives): Two people keeping score in two currencies, then arguing about the exchange rate.
- **Neurobiology** (Read your state first): How the brain turns down sounds and sensations, borrowed loosely. In the brain it is automatic and takes a fraction of a second; here it's a few seconds you choose to take.
- **Aromatherapy** (Read your state first): For some people, a familiar scent or a calmer room is a quick cue to slow down. Where and when you talk is part of the method.
- **Psychology** (Notice the quiet incentives): Why a flat "thanks" can be heard as sarcasm, and why covering turns sour only when it's silent.

Two fields, one idea: Philosophy + Business. People can mean two different things by "fair." A job list with one owner per job makes it simple: check the job, not the person.

In real life

- **Partners:** One counts hours spent cleaning. The other counts all the planning that happened before anyone picked up a cloth. Both are real work, so put the planning on the list too, in minutes.
- **Parents:** Older kids can own age-sized jobs too, like feeding the cat or packing their own lunch. Put their name on the list, with a parent as the second name.
- **Family:** One sibling visits a parent every week. Another pays for extra help. Each thinks they're doing their share, in a different currency.
- **Roommates:** One wants a fixed schedule. The other prefers "whoever's free does it." Neither is lazy. They just use different kinds of fair.

- **Coworkers:** One person quietly fixes everyone else's slides before the meeting. Because it always gets done, nobody knows it was ever a problem.
- **More than two partners:** In a home with three adults, the one who works from home is always the one who "can." See *More than two* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/more-than-two).
- **Different hours:** Someone who works nights sleeps in the day. Being home isn't being free. See *Different hours*.
- **When one is ill:** Share by energy, not hours, with a backup agreed for low days. See *When one of you is ill* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/when-one-is-ill).
- **Friends:** One friend always hosts, and nobody thanks them anymore. See *Friends* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/friends).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I think we're counting in different ways. Can we put both on the list?"

TRY THIS:

Read the example closest to your home to the other person, and ask, "Does this sound like us?"

Common mix-ups

- **“If it got done, there’s no problem.”** Someone may be paying for that in time and energy.
- **“Holding the owner to it is being strict.”** It’s just keeping the agreement you both made. That’s kinder than quiet resentment.
- **“Letting a comment land means ignoring it.”** It’s about timing, not about swallowing your feelings.
- **“‘Give me a second’ is rude.”** It’s a way of taking the other person seriously enough to answer well.
- **“One kind of fair is the right one.”** Both are reasonable. What matters is agreeing which one you’ll use.
- **“The owner is the boss of that job.”** The owner does the job. They don’t direct everyone else, and the second name isn’t a supervisor.
- **“I covered for months, so now I can bring it all up.”** A long list lands as a bill. Mention covering as it happens.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I don’t think either of us is wrong. I think we’ve been using different rulers.”

Money between you

Money is where the two kinds of fair meet most often. Three common ways to share it:

- **All shared:** both incomes go into one pot.
- **Separate:** each keeps their own money and pays agreed bills, often half each. That’s fair by promises: the same rule for both.
- **Proportional:** each puts into a shared pot in line with what they earn, and keeps the rest. That’s fair by results: each is left with a similar share.

Many couples mix them: a joint account for bills and food, and some money each that nobody has to explain. The right way is the one you both chose with your eyes open. To talk about it, start with your money stories (how

money worked at home when you were growing up), then the numbers, then a “talk first” amount for big buys that applies to both of you. A limit you both chose and both keep is care, not control.

For example (made up): Niamh takes home £2,600 a month and Tariq £1,900. Rent and bills will be £1,500. They split it 58/42, in line with their pay: £870 and £630.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Can we each say how money worked in our families growing up?”
“Would half each, or in line with our pay, feel fairer to you?”

A couple and a housemate

A couple sharing a home with a housemate who isn't a partner is a different shape from three equals. Keep two lists: **house jobs** for all three of you (bins, bathroom, bills, the landlord), and **couple jobs** just for the two of you. Decide house questions with all three of you there, not in bed the night before. Hear the housemate first on anything that affects them, keep couple arguments out of shared rooms, and never ask them to be the referee.

For example (made up): Ollie and Hamza share a flat with their friend Bex. They split the rent by room (the couple has the bigger one) and the bills by person. All three hold a short house meeting on the first Sunday of the month.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“That's a house question. Let's decide it when Bex is here.”

More for your situation

Each of these pages takes the ideas in this chapter into one kind of relationship. Start from your relationship (spreadloveandacceptance.com/by-relationship) lists them all.

- Friends · More than two partners · Sharing a room · Money together (spreadloveandacceptance.com/money-together)

- Foster and kinship families · When a child has ADHD (spreadloveandacceptance.com/adhd-kids) · Grown-up children (spreadloveandacceptance.com/grown-up-children) · Family rifts (spreadloveandacceptance.com/family-rifts)
- Different hours · Coming home (spreadloveandacceptance.com/coming-home) · When one is ill · Two faiths (spreadloveandacceptance.com/two-faiths) · On my own

TRY THIS:

Agree on what counts as fair on a calm, easy day, not in the middle of a disagreement.

Start by each saying which kind of fair comes more naturally to you: results or promises.

Then pick three regular jobs and write an owner for each in the job list: the person who does it. Add a second name, someone who notices if it slips. It can be the same person.

Finally, agree on a short phrase for when something lands hard, like “Give me a second.” Agree that the other person will wait, and that the person who asked for a second will come back to it.

A note on safety

These tools only work when each person feels free to say no, to ask for a pause, or to keep their own notes private. If talking about what’s fair ever feels unsafe, or one of you feels you can’t say no, stop using the tools and talk with a trained counsellor on your own. When someone is afraid of their partner, counselling together isn’t advised. Not safe at home? (spreadloveandacceptance.com/safety) lists free, private hotlines.

A promise is something both people chose and either can ask to change. Rules one person sets for the other, with checking, punishment or money held back, are control, and that is not your fault. See normal limits and control.

WORDS YOU COULD USE, WITH SOMEONE YOU TRUST:

“Things at home don’t feel fair, and I’m scared to bring it up. Can I talk it through with you?”

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ✓ **There are two kinds of fair:** by results (did it all get done?) and by promises (did each of us do what we agreed?). Agree which one you’re using.
- ✓ **Once a job has an owner, look to the owner.** Covering for someone is kind when you say it out loud.
- ✓ **Let a comment land before you react:** notice it, name it, then decide what to say.
- ✓ **Keep the two questions apart:** “Was the job done?” is about a fact; “Did that comment hurt?” is about a feeling.

THIS CONNECTS TO

Part Three · Chapter 11 · Healing after hurt

Repair and apologies that land

[read online](#)

Part Three · Chapter 4 · How communication works

Letting words land before you reply

[read online](#)

Part Three · Chapter 10 · Values, meaning and a good life

Fairness as a value you choose together

[read online](#)

Part Three · Chapter 17 · Groups, influence and culture

How a group’s norms decide what feels fair

[read online](#)

PUT IT TO USE



**Six-week program, week 4:
talk about it kindly**

[spreadloveandacceptance.com/
prog-01](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/prog-01)



Say it so it lands

[spreadloveandacceptance.com/
workpapers/
wp-09-say-it-so-it-lands](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-09-say-it-so-it-lands)

V

PART TWO • CHAPTER V

The monthly look-back: a calm relationship check-in

Once a month, look back for the problems that keep coming back, and fix the setup instead of having the same argument again.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Weekly check-ins miss patterns | 10. Each idea in everyday life |
| 2. You need four weeks of notes and one list | 11. Inside you, and between you |
| 3. Mark an x for each week a job slipped | 12. In real life |
| 4. A problem that keeps coming back usually has no real owner | 13. Common mix-ups |
| 5. Sort each repeat into one of three kinds | 14. Starting out: before you move in |
| 6. Count the gaps each month | 15. Raising a grandchild (kinship care) |
| 7. Look back even when nothing is slipping | 16. More for your situation |
| 8. It's not a review of either person | 17. On your own: a monthly look at yourself |
| 9. Keep it short and kind | 18. The fields behind this chapter |

IN SHORT:

- **Weekly check-ins miss patterns.** Once a month, look back over four weeks of notes and your job list.
- **Mark an **x** for each week a job slipped.** Anything with two or more gets sorted.
- **A problem that keeps coming back usually has no real owner.** Fix the setup, not the person.
- **Keep it short and kind,** and look back even in the quiet months.

THE THIRD TUESDAY IN A ROW

The bins again. You could have the same ten-minute back-and-forth about Tuesday. Or you could notice that Tuesday has now happened three times, and ask what it is about Tuesdays.

01

Weekly check-ins miss patterns.

One missed job looks like bad luck. The same job missed week after week is a pattern, and it's easiest to see when you look at the whole month. The "audit" here is a careful, friendly look back, more like a self-check than an inspection.

02

You need four weeks of notes and one list.

Bring the month's four weekly notes from Who did what (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-01) (a few lines a week is enough) and your job list from One owner per job (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-03-one-owner-per-job). That's all. Twenty minutes is usually enough. If either of your stress tanks is high that day (0.60 or more on How much are you carrying? (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-02-how-much-are-you-carrying)), move it a day or two.

03

Mark an X for each week a job slipped.

A job "slipped" if it was noticed but not done, only done after being raised more than once, or quietly covered by someone who isn't its owner. Look closely at every job with two or more X. Three or four in a month is a real pattern, not just bad luck.

A problem that keeps coming back usually has no real owner.

It gets patched every week and never fixed. The owner is the person who does the job, start to finish. The fix is to give the job one owner whose name sticks, or to talk honestly about whether anyone has the time and energy for it.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 12

One owner per job: a list for two homes

Laura and Dan, co-parents in two homes

One owner per job: a list for two homes

Person A

Laura

Person B

Dan

Date of this list

1 October 2026

The split you agreed (optional)

Week on, week off; handoff Sunday at 5

Who owns each job

Job	How often	Owner	Helper or backup	Notes
Pack the handoff bag	Weekly	Laura	Dan	Laura keeps the checklist and the spare kit; whoever hands over packs from it
Send medicine and chargers with the bag	Weekly	Laura	Dan	Inhaler: write the last dose time on the card
School forms and permission slips	As needed	Dan	Laura	
Reply to school emails and apps	Weekly	Dan		Dan reads them Sunday night
Kids' doctor and dentist visits	As needed	Dan		Dan books; tells Laura the date

Job	How often	Owner	Helper or backup	Notes
Homework help (Laura's weeks)	Daily	Laura		
Homework help (Dan's weeks)	Daily	Dan		
Activities and sign-ups	As needed	Dan	Laura	Swimming and Cubs
Buy clothes as they outgrow them	As needed	Laura		Receipts in the shared folder
Big decisions (school, health, new activities)	As needed	Both (decide together)		A decision, not a job: Dan puts it on the list; talked through by phone, never at handoff

DOES EVERY JOB HAVE AN OWNER?

Jobs with an owner

10 of 10. Every job has an owner.

How the jobs sit across the homes

Counted by how often each job comes round (a daily job about five times a weekly one): Laura's home 52% · Dan's home 47% · Together 1%. You wrote down the split you agreed: "Week on, week off; handoff Sunday at 5". Does this match it? Two homes rarely split evenly, and that can be fair: weekdays and weekends, distance and work all play a part.

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. If one parent is afraid of the other, a shared list isn't the right tool: see Not safe at home? on this site.

Fill in your own: One owner per job (two homes)
(spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/fill/wp-03)

Sort each repeat into one of three kinds.

No clear owner: update the job list. An owner who can't keep up: have a kind, honest talk. A short-term cause, like illness or travel: note it and move on.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 13

What keeps coming back?

Ash, Robin and Jules, a triad sharing a home

What keeps coming back?

Person A

Ash

Person B

Robin

Person C

Jules

Month

September 2026

Part A: Gather the month's notes

Mark an **x** for each week a job slipped. **x** = it slipped that week.

Task	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Times flagged
<i>Cat litter</i>	x	x		x	3
<i>Recycling out on Thursday</i>		x	x		2
<i>Book Jules's car service</i>			x		1
<i>Shared calendar kept up to date</i>	x	x	x	x	4

Part B: Sort each gap

Sort every task flagged twice or more.

Task	Named owner on the job list?	Classification	Action
<i>Cat litter</i>	No	Structural gap	Robin owns it, with Ash as backup; on the one-owner list tonight

Task	Named owner on the job list?	Classification	Action
Shared calendar kept up to date	Yes	Capacity issue	Ash owns it but is on nights this month; talk on Sunday about what comes off Ash's list
Recycling out on Thursday	Yes	One-off, no action	Two bank holidays moved the day

PART C: WRAP UP THE AUDIT

Structural gaps found

1. Update One owner per job for each of these in this session.

Capacity issues found

1. Set a time for the conversation. This audit brings it to light, but it doesn't replace it.

One-offs

1

Part D (optional): Thanked, or only noticed when it's missed?

Job	Gets thanked	Only noticed when missed?	One way to notice it
Keeping the calendar	Rarely	Yes	Say thanks at Sunday dinner when it's up to date
Topping up the cat food	Never	Yes	A note on the fridge

A made-up example. Names and details are invented. A task with no owner is a gap in the setup, not a verdict on the person who kept covering it.

Fill in your own: What keeps coming back? (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/fill/wp-04)

06

Count the gaps each month.

Write down how many gaps of each kind you found. If the number of jobs with no clear owner falls over several months, the setup is working; one month can be a normal swing. If it keeps rising, something bigger has

changed, and it's worth a talk.



PROFESSOR PUDDLES

The look-back has its own workpaper: a month of notes, one list, and an **X** for each week a job slipped. It makes a pattern easy to see.

WORKPAPER WP-04 **What keeps coming back?** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-04

07

Look back even when nothing is slipping.

A month with no gaps is good news, and it's also the month most likely to go unchecked. When something has worked for a while, people stop looking, and nothing breaks on the day that happens. Keep the look-back going on quiet months, and add one question: “*What’s something we’ve stopped noticing or mentioning?*” That is how a look-back guards against complacency (spreadloveandacceptance.com/complacency).

08

It’s not a review of either person.

You don’t add up old hours or punish old mistakes. You can thank someone for what they carried before; you just don’t bill for the past. The only question is where the setup isn’t working yet, and what you’ll try next month.



TIDBIT

Tidbit wants you to know: a look-back can start with a high five. Name one thing that went well first! The weekly card has a nice way to begin.

TOOL **Kitchen-table check-in** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/check-ins

09

Keep it short and kind.

Start with something that went well. Talk about the job, not the person. If a gap needs a proper talk, set it for another day using Check-ins (spreadloveandacceptance.com/check-ins). If a talk starts going badly, either of you can call a pause, and the person who paused names a time to come back.

FILLED-IN EXAMPLE 14

Kitchen-table check-in: this week

Linda and her grown-up son Jordan, who live together

Our weekly check-in

Week of Oct 5 · Linda and Jordan

Who's checking in (optional)

Linda and Jordan

One thing that went well

Jordan cooked twice, and we ate together on Thursday.

One thing that felt heavy

The bathroom, again. And Mum's back was bad all week.

One small thing to try next week

Jordan owns the bathroom on Saturdays. Linda stops checking it.

Our next check-in

Sunday after dinner

Any jobs that slipped or came up again this week? (optional)

Dishes

Laundry

Trash and recycling

Groceries

Cooking

Cleaning the bathroom

Paying the bills

Planning and remembering

ON THE CARD

One topic at a time. We're on the same side. Tick a job once it has one owner.

A made-up example. Names and details are invented.

Fill in your own: Kitchen-table check-in: this week

(spreadloveandacceptance.com/check-ins)

Each idea in everyday life

The sections above say what each idea means. Here each one gets a real-life example, words you could say, and one small step.

1. Weekly check-ins miss patterns

For example: Four flatmates. Each week the bathroom bin overflowed, and each week it looked like bad luck. Looking at the whole month showed it happened every single week.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Can we look at the whole month, not just this week?”

TRY THIS:

Pick a monthly date now, like the last Sunday, and put it in both calendars.

2. Four weeks of notes and one list

For example: A couple on different shifts keep their weekly notes in one shared note on their phones. They do the look-back on the one evening they're both off. See *Different hours* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/different-hours).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I'm running on empty today. Can we move the look-back to Thursday?”

TRY THIS:

Choose one place where both of you can find the weekly notes.

3. Mark an **x** when a job slipped

For example: Two foster carers look back. The reading log was missed three weeks out of four. Three **x** means it's a pattern, not a bad week. See *Foster and kinship families* (spreadloveandacceptance.com/foster-and-kinship).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“This isn't about who. It's just which jobs slipped.”

TRY THIS:

Mark the **x** in pencil, together, before anyone explains anything.

4. A repeat usually has no real owner

For example: Three partners share a home. “Whoever’s free” does the grocery order, and it was late three times. Nobody owned it, so everybody assumed. See [More than two](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/more-than-two) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/more-than-two).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Whose name is next to this one? If nobody’s, shall we pick?”

TRY THIS:

For each job with two or more **X**, check that one name is written next to it.

5. Sort each repeat

For example: Separated parents look at the missed homework folder. Was nobody sure which home signs it (no owner)? Is one parent swamped (can’t keep up)? Or was it the week she had flu (a one-off)? See [Co-parenting](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/co-parenting) (spreadloveandacceptance.com/co-parenting).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Is this a list problem, a too-much problem, or just a bad week?”

TRY THIS:

Write one of the three kinds next to every repeat before you decide what to do.

The monthly look-back

Which gaps kept reopening, however often we closed them?

1 Mark the month

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Recycling	×	×	×	×
Bins	×	×	.	×
School forms	.	×	.	.
Dog's walk	.	.	.	.

The **×** goes next to a job, never next to a person.

2 Sort each repeat

Structural gap

No clear owner, or the wrong name on the list.

➔ Update the job list.

Capacity issue

An owner who has run out of room.

➔ Set a time for a kind talk.

One-off

A clear short-term reason: illness, travel.

➔ Note it and move on.

3 Count, and close the month

Fewer structural gaps over several months is a good sign. Zero isn't the goal.

Short and kind. A look at the setup, not a review of either person.

This book's own method, adapted from team "retrospectives"; it hasn't been tested as a household method.

FIGURE 12 The monthly look-back: mark the month, sort each repeat, count and close. The cross goes next to a job, never a person.

6. Count the gaps

For example: Two business partners write their monthly count on a whiteboard in the back office. In March, four jobs had no clear owner. By

June, one did.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“Let’s just write the numbers down and see how they look in three months.”

TRY THIS:

Write this month’s three numbers on the back page of your notes.

7. Look back on quiet months too

For example: The kids have left home and nothing is slipping. At the look-back, one of them says, “We don’t really talk at dinner anymore.” Nothing was broken. Something was drifting. See Kids grown and gone (spreadloveandacceptance.com/empty-nest).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“What’s something we’ve stopped noticing or mentioning?”

TRY THIS:

Keep the date on a quiet month, and ask just that one question.

8. Not a review of either person

For example: After a month in hospital, one partner comes home to a long list of what slipped. They thank each other for what each carried instead, and fix only next month. See When one of you is ill (spreadloveandacceptance.com/when-one-is-ill).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I see how much you carried. Let’s just set up next month.”

TRY THIS:

If you notice yourself adding up past hours, stop and say one thank-you instead.

9. Short and kind

For example: A mum and two teens hold their look-back over pizza. Each says one good thing first. One gap gets a new owner. It's over in fifteen minutes. See Teens (spreadloveandacceptance.com/teens).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"This needs a proper talk. Can we do it Thursday, not now?"

TRY THIS:

Set a timer for twenty minutes, and stop when it rings.

YOUR PART, AND ONLY YOUR PART. In the look-back you can only fix the gaps you own, and offer help with the rest. You can't make someone keep a rhythm. Keep the rhythms you can keep, notice which ones are kept in return, and let your effort follow: more where it's shared, less where it isn't, so the rhythm doesn't run on one person's energy. More in Part One: who you are today (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-2-now)

THE LAST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH

Two mugs of tea, four weeks of notes and twenty minutes. You go down the list. Most weeks went fine. Two jobs keep coming up. That's the whole meeting, and it's enough.

Inside you, and between you

- **In you:** Look at your own routines as a setup you can adjust. Spot the easy defaults, like "I'll just do it," that let a gap quietly reopen.
- **Between you and others:** Look at the month together, give repeating gaps a clear owner, and keep count so jobs don't drift back to whoever notices first.

In real life

- **Partners:** Sam and Alex's bins slipped three weeks in a row, because Alex works late on Tuesdays. After a trial swap, they make it official: Sam owns the bins, and Alex takes the recycling and the weekly grocery order, so the hours stay even.
- **Family:** Three siblings keep forgetting to call their dad's landlord about repairs. It turns out nobody ever agreed who would.
- **Roommates:** The recycling overflows every other week. Everyone thought someone else was taking it down.
- **Coworkers:** Meeting notes go missing twice a month. Giving note-taking a named owner fixes it by the next month.
- **Long distance:** A couple in two cities do the look-back by video. Their repeat is "who calls first," so they give it an owner per weekday. See Long distance (spreadloveandacceptance.com/long-distance).
- **Friends:** Two friends notice their monthly dinner has been cancelled three times. Nobody owned booking it. See Friends (spreadloveandacceptance.com/friends).
- **Grandparents and parents:** School pick-ups by grandma slipped twice, both on days she wasn't told about. The gap was the message, not grandma. See Grandparents (spreadloveandacceptance.com/grandparents).

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

"I don't think anyone dropped this. I think nobody ever picked it up."

Common mix-ups

- **“This is where we settle who owes what.”** Past hours are never billed to anyone, though you can still say thank you for them. You only fix the setup going forward.
- **“If a job slipped, the owner failed.”** The gap might be in the list, in the owner’s capacity, or just a one-off week.
- **“One bad week means we should change everything.”** Don’t make a lasting change because of a short-term cause.
- **“We can skip the weekly checks and just do this.”** The monthly look-back only works if the weekly notes feed it.
- **“More gaps this month means we’re failing.”** One month can be a normal swing, or it can mean life changed. That’s a reason to talk, not to worry.
- **“The look-back is for the person who keeps the notes.”** It works best when both bring their notes, and both talk.

A note on safety: These tools only work when each person feels free to say no, to ask for a pause, or to keep their own notes private. If looking back together ever feels unsafe, or one of you feels you can’t say no, stop using the tools and talk with a trained counsellor on your own. When someone is afraid of their partner, counselling together isn’t advised. Not safe at home? (spreadloveandacceptance.com/safety) lists free, private hotlines.

A look-back is something you both choose. If one person demands logs of the other’s every hour, checks their phone without agreement, or uses the **x** marks to punish, that is control, not a look-back, and it is not your fault. See Not safe at home? and normal limits and control (spreadloveandacceptance.com/money-together).

Starting out: before you move in

New together, and about to share a home? The tools work best now, before habits set. A gentle order, about one step a week:

1. **Week 1:** each write down the rulebook from the home you grew up in (spreadloveandacceptance.com/growing-up), then swap. Be curious, not judging.
2. **Week 2:** talk about money: your money stories first, then the split (Chapter IV (page 112)).
3. **Week 3:** write your first job list, with one owner per job, thinking jobs included (One owner per job (spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/fill/wp-03)).
4. **Week 4:** make a pause plan (spreadloveandacceptance.com/pursue-withdraw) on a calm day.
5. **Week 5:** each name three things that matter most to you about a home (Part Three, Chapter 10 (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/understanding-10-values)).
6. **After the move:** log one ordinary week after two weeks, and do your first short look-back after four.

It isn't a test, and it isn't keeping score. It's so neither of you has to guess.

For example (made up): Niamh and Tariq, eight months together, find their families meant different things by “tidy.” They agree: kitchen every night, the rest on Sunday.

WORDS YOU COULD USE:

“I don't want us to keep score. I just want us never to have to guess. Could we try a few small things before we move?”

Raising a grandchild (kinship care)

Many grandparents and other relatives raise a child whose parents can't, and much of it is about things that keep coming back: cancelled calls, hard evenings after contact, forms. A monthly look-back helps. Some repeats you can own; some, like a parent who misses calls, you can't. For those, own the plan for the evening after.

- **The loyalty bind:** the child may love the parent who can't look after them and you. Tell them they don't have to choose, and don't run the parent down in front of them.

- **Explaining an absent parent:** short, true and kind, in words for their age, and always “it’s not your fault.”
- **When the parent is your own adult child** and things are hard between you: keep messages about the child short and civil, for the child’s sake, and leave the door open.
- **Look after yourself:** ask for respite and join other kinship carers. In England and Wales, the charity Kinship (kinship.org.uk) can help.

For example (made up): Maureen, 63, is raising her grandson Tyler, 9. Her look-back shows his mum’s Sunday call fell through three times this month. She plans those evenings (hot chocolate, his football annual) and asks her brother to take Tyler swimming on Sunday afternoons.

WORDS YOU COULD USE, WITH THE CHILD:

“Mum loves you. She isn’t well enough to look after you right now, and that’s not your fault.”

More for your situation

A look-back works in every kind of relationship, with small changes. These pages take it into one situation each. Start from your relationship (spreadloveandacceptance.com/by-relationship) lists them all.

- More than two partners · Money together · Gaming and time together (spreadloveandacceptance.com/gaming-and-time-together) · Sharing a room (spreadloveandacceptance.com/sharing-a-room)
- Foster and kinship families · When a child has ADHD (spreadloveandacceptance.com/adhd-kids) · Grown-up children (spreadloveandacceptance.com/grown-up-children) · Family rifts (spreadloveandacceptance.com/family-rifts) · Kids grown and gone
- Different hours · Coming home (spreadloveandacceptance.com/coming-home) · When one is ill · Two faiths (spreadloveandacceptance.com/two-faiths) · On my own (spreadloveandacceptance.com/on-my-own) · For counsellors (spreadloveandacceptance.com/for-counselors)

On your own: a monthly look at yourself

Once a month, look back at your own month, kindly. Not a scorecard, more like a weather report.

- What filled your battery this month, and what drained it?
- Which of your limits held, and which slipped?
- Choose one small thing to keep, and one to change next month.

For example: Gillian lives on her own after a divorce. Her monthly look-back shows the same *x* three weeks running: she skipped her Thursday swim to answer work emails. She moves the emails, not the swim. See On my own.

WORDS YOU COULD USE (TO YOURSELF):

“Not a scorecard. Just this month’s weather.”

TRY THIS:

On the last day of this month, write three lines: one thing that filled you, one that drained you, one thing to change.

IN THE INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM:

The Individual package and your report (spreadloveandacceptance.com/self-path) · Part One: a kind monthly look at yourself (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/self-3-next-in-depth) · Step 1: check your battery · The whole book on sharing the load (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/topic-share-the-load)

The fields behind this chapter

This chapter draws on 7 of the author’s thirteen fields (see the Preface (page 18) or the About page (spreadloveandacceptance.com/about)):

- **Finance** (See the whole load): The month-end close: check the plan against the log, so next month starts clean.
- **Business** (Fix the setup, not the person): The audit habit, as a friendly self-check. A job that keeps slipping usually has no real owner.

- **Economics** (Notice the quiet incentives): Past hours can't be handed back, so they aren't billed.
- **Behavioural science** (Notice the quiet incentives): Three or four slips in a month is a pattern that's easy to miss week by week.
- **Psychology** (Tune how you send and receive): Say a pattern as a repeated fact, not a verdict.
- **Philosophy** (Fix the setup, not the person): The Ship of Theseus: a ship rebuilt plank by plank is still the same ship. Your agreements can be rebuilt and still be yours.
- **Holistic therapies** (Read your state first): Body first, argument second. A calm look-back a few days late beats a tense one on time.

Two fields, one idea: Finance + Business. Once a month, look back like an audit: which jobs kept slipping? A job that keeps slipping usually needs an owner, not more effort.

TRY THIS:

Put a relaxed 20-minute date on the calendar, once a month.

Until then, keep your weekly Who did what notes somewhere you can both find them.

At the look-back, start by naming one thing that went well this month.

End by writing down how many gaps of each kind you found, so over the next few months you can see if the number is falling.

That's the end of Part Two. The book goes on in Part Three: Understanding people (spreadloveandacceptance.com/book/understanding-1-feelings), chapters on how people work, for anyone. To put Parts One and Two into practice first, try the six-week program (spreadloveandacceptance.com/prog-01): six gentle weeks, with one chapter and one small tool each week.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- ✓ **Weekly check-ins miss patterns.** Once a month, look back over four weeks of notes and your job list.
- ✓ **Mark an X for each week a job slipped.** Anything with two or more gets sorted.
- ✓ **A problem that keeps coming back usually has no real owner.** Fix the setup, not the person.
- ✓ **Keep it short and kind,** and look back even in the quiet months.

THIS CONNECTS TO

Part One · Next · Who you are becoming

The same kind look, on your own

[read online](#)

Part Three · Chapter 6 · Habits and change

Why problems come back, and how habits stick

[read online](#)

Part Two · Chapter II · Is the split working?

The setup score the look-back feeds

[page 54](#)

Part Three · Chapter 11 · Healing after hurt

Repairing what the look-back finds

[read online](#)

PUT IT TO USE



Six-week program, week 6: make it last

[spreadloveandacceptance.com/
prog-01](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/prog-01)



What keeps coming back? A monthly look-back

[spreadloveandacceptance.com/
workpapers/
wp-04-what-keeps-coming-back](https://spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/wp-04-what-keeps-coming-back)

Workpapers and tools in this book

Every workpaper and tool the chapters point to, in two separate lists, with the chapters that mention each one. All of them are free at spreadloveandacceptance.com, with no account, and what you type stays on your device.

Workpapers mentioned in this book

Pages to fill in, on your own or together.

WORKPAPER WP-01 **Who did what** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-01

In: The work nobody sees (page 18), Is the split working? (page 54), The monthly look-back (page 116)

WORKPAPER WP-02 **How much are you carrying?** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-02

In: Is the split working? (page 54), Full tanks and different angles (page 76), The monthly look-back (page 116)

WORKPAPER WP-03 **One owner per job** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-03

In: Is the split working? (page 54), Two kinds of fair (page 95), The monthly look-back (page 116)

WORKPAPER WP-04 **What keeps coming back?** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-04

In: The monthly look-back (page 116)

WORKPAPER WP-09 **Say it so it lands** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-09

In: Why we get out of tune (page 37), Two kinds of fair (page 95)

WORKPAPER WP-11 **The Calm-Down Kit** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-11

In: Full tanks and different angles (page 76)

WORKPAPER WP-13 **The 90-second daily check-in** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/wp-13

In: Why we get out of tune (page 37)

Tools mentioned in this book

Interactive helpers to use on the site.

TOOL **Rewind the talk** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/carrier-wave-decoder

In: Why we get out of tune (page 37), Full tanks and different angles (page 76)

TOOL **Kitchen-table check-in** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/check-ins

In: The monthly look-back (page 116)

TOOL **Chat analyzer: Help me write it (ask for a change)** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/small-wins

In: Two kinds of fair (page 95)

TOOL **Old rules, new choices** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/growing-up

In: Full tanks and different angles (page 76)

TOOL **Rhythms side by side** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/tools/frequency-calibration

In: Why we get out of tune (page 37)

TOOL **Who does what? Quick look** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/lemonade-stand

In: The work nobody sees (page 18)

TOOL **Who does what? Count the hours and bills** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/lemonade-stand

In: Is the split working? (page 54), Two kinds of fair (page 95)

TOOL **My weather today** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/quick-checks

In: Full tanks and different angles (page 76)

TOOL **Plan it once: handoff bag for two homes** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/co-parenting

In: The work nobody sees (page 18), Is the split working? (page 54), Full tanks and different angles (page 76), Two kinds of fair (page 95), The monthly look-back (page 116)

TOOL **Plan it once: room agreement for roommates** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/sharing-a-room

In: The work nobody sees (page 18), Is the split working? (page 54), Full tanks and different angles (page 76), Two kinds of fair (page 95), The monthly look-back (page 116)

TOOL **Team job list: the 10-minute weekly round** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/work

In: Is the split working? (page 54)

TOOL **Learn by doing: connect two fields of study** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/polymath

In: The work nobody sees (page 18), Why we get out of tune (page 37), Is the split working? (page 54), Full tanks and different angles (page 76), Two kinds of fair (page 95), The monthly look-back (page 116)

TOOL **Fair split check: this week** · spreadloveandacceptance.com/is-the-setup-working

In: Is the split working? (page 54)

How the numbers work

Every number in this book is arithmetic you can do with a pencil. None of them is a test, a diagnosis or a verdict on anyone: they describe a week, a load or a way of sharing work. The weights and cut-offs are this book's own rules of thumb, not research findings, and you are free to disagree with them. The worked examples are the book's own, so you can check them against the chapters.

Two habits run through all of them. **Scores are rounded to two decimal places before their band is read**, so the number you see and the words you see always agree. And **nobody's score is ever worked out for them**: if someone's own answer is missing, the total waits.

The load: How much are you carrying?

You score five things from 0 (not at all) to 4 (very true), about the last day or two: sleep debt, workload elsewhere, unresolved conflict, your physical state, and time pressure today.

$$\text{load} = (\text{sleep} + \text{workload} + \text{conflict} + \text{body} + \text{time}) \div 20$$

The answer runs from 0 to 1, and **higher means heavier**. Under 0.30 is a light load, 0.30 up to 0.60 a medium load, and 0.60 or more a high load. (The worksheet splits each band in two for its words: very light under 0.15, light, medium on the lighter side under 0.45, medium on the heavier side, high under 0.80, and very high from 0.80.) Your **battery** is the other side of the same thing, the energy you have left: a high load means a low battery. The battery is a picture in words, not a second score.

WORKED EXAMPLE Rosa, from Part Two, Chapter III, page 76, scores sleep 3, workload 4, conflict 1, body 2 and time 3.

$$3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 = 13; 13 \div 20 = 0.65, \text{ which is a high load.}$$

Two or more of you: each person scores only themselves, and the shared figure is the plain average of everyone's own scores. If any one person is at 0.60 or more, treat that as the headline, whatever the average says.

Coming back after a pause (the Calm-Down Kit): if you like numbers, take the score again after a calming round. Under 0.50, go back at the time you named. From 0.50

to 0.59, take another round. At 0.60 or more after two rounds, put it off to a named time. The kit’s line sits at 0.50 on purpose: you don’t need a light load to come back, just less than half.

My weather today: the room in your day

My weather today shows words, not numbers: a sky (clear, gusty or fogged in) and how much room you have today. Behind the words sits a rough tally from 0 to 100, where **higher means a heavier day**. You only see it if you tick “Show the numbers behind this”.

WHAT YOU PICKED	ADDS
The sky: clear, gusty, fogged in	0, 26, 34
The pressure: light, building, heavy (skipped: 6)	0, 10, 20
Last night’s sleep: properly rested, about enough, short night, barely slept (skipped: 6)	0, 2, 10, 18
People load: barely any, a normal amount, a lot, nonstop (skipped: 4)	0, 3, 9, 14
Ground conditions (hungry, thirsty, in pain and so on)	4 each, up to 14
What’s blowing in (work, money, health and so on)	3 each, up to 10

Under 45 reads as lots of room today, 45 to 64 as some room, and 65 or more as very little room.

WORKED EXAMPLE Joel, from Part One, Now (online), picks gusty, building pressure, a short night, a lot of people time, one ground condition (hungry) and one thing blowing in (work).

$26 + 10 + 10 + 9 + 4 + 3 = 62$: some room today, with less than usual, so the forecast says to go gently and settle first.

Workload balance: how evenly the hours are shared

Two people. Work out each person’s share of the logged hours as a percentage.

$$\text{balance} = 1 - (\text{the difference between the two percentages} \div 100)$$

50/50 scores 1.00; one person doing everything scores 0.00. It doesn't matter which of you does more. Balance ignores the total, which is one reason the load sits beside it.

WORKED EXAMPLE Rosemary logs 14 hours and Ken 10 (Part Two, Chapter II, page 54). Out of 24 hours, that is 58.3% and 41.7%.

$$1 - (58.3 - 41.7) \div 100 = 1 - 0.167 = 0.83$$

Three or more people, or an agreed split. The same idea, said more generally: how much of the week would have to change hands to reach the target, compared with the most that ever could.

each share = that person's hours $\div$ everyone's hours
target = an even share ($1 \div$ number of people), or the split you agreed
moved = $\frac{1}{2} \times$ the sum of every |share - target|
most = $1 -$ the smallest target share
balance = $1 -$ moved $\div$ most

WORKED EXAMPLE Three partners log 15, 9 and 6 hours (Chapter II, page 54): shares 0.50, 0.30 and 0.20, against a third each.

moved = $\frac{1}{2} \times (0.167 + 0.033 + 0.133) = 0.167$; most = $1 - 0.333 = 0.667$;
balance = $1 - 0.167 \div 0.667 = 0.75$. In hours, $0.167 \times 30 = 5$ hours a week would change hands for an even split.

With an agreed split, use it as the target: co-parents who agreed 60/40 and log 12 and 8 hours score 1.00.

Ownership: does every job have a name?

ownership = jobs with a named owner $\div$ all the jobs on the list

The calculator counts a job as owned when it has one named owner. A backstop, the person who notices if it slipped, is a good habit and has its own column, but the score only needs the owner. The starter jobs on the worksheet don't count until you give them an owner or change them. Never raise the score by deleting the jobs nobody owns: they are exactly what the score is there to show.

WORKED EXAMPLE Rosemary and Ken list 12 regular jobs, and 9 have an owner: $9 \div 12 = 0.75$.

Who carries more of the list. A score of 1.00 can still mean one person owns everything, so One owner per job also shows each person's share of the list, with each job weighted by how often it comes round and how big it is:

weight of a job = how often $\times$ size
how often: daily 5, weekly 1, ongoing 1, monthly 0.25, as needed 0.1
size: small 0.5, medium 1 (the default), big 2
(or, where you gave the hours each time: hours $\div$ 0.5)
share = the weights of that person's jobs $\div$ the weights of all the jobs

A job you decide together counts the same for each of you; on a list for two homes it shows as "Together" instead.

WORKED EXAMPLE One person owns the cooking (daily, medium: 5) and the bills (monthly, medium: 0.25). The other owns the laundry (weekly, big: 2) and the car (as needed, medium: 0.1). Each owns two jobs, but $5.25 \div 7.35 = 71\%$ of the list's weight sits with the first person, and 29% with the second.

Who's carrying more right now. Who did what flags the busiest person when their share of the logged minutes (or of the work done without being asked) is at least half, and at least 20 points over an even share: 70% or more for two people, 53% or more for three. In the Preface, page 18's example, one partner did 105 of the 115 minutes that were noticed and handled without anyone asking: 91%, so the sheet says so.

The setup score: can the way you share the work last?

setup score = balance $\times$ 0.40
+ ownership $\times$ 0.35
+ (1 - the average load) $\times$ 0.25

The weights add up to 1, so the score runs from 0 to 1, and here **higher means the setup is working better**, the opposite of the load. The load is the only part that counts against the score, which is why it enters as 1 - load. 0.70 or more reads as working well (the "Who does what?" page says "holding"); 0.40 up to 0.70 as needs a

look (“drifting”); below 0.40 as needs a rethink, together. It is a snapshot of the setup, never a probability and never a verdict on anyone.

WORKED EXAMPLE Rosemary and Ken (Chapter II, page 54): balance 0.83, ownership 0.75, and their own load scores are 0.45 and 0.30, an average of 0.375.

$0.83 \times 0.40 + 0.75 \times 0.35 + (1 - 0.375) \times 0.25 = 0.333 + 0.263 + 0.156 = 0.75$: working well.

The shortfall is what each part could have earned minus what it did earn: balance $0.40 - 0.333 = 0.067$; ownership $0.35 - 0.263 = 0.088$; load $0.25 - 0.156 = 0.094$. The biggest shortfall is the load, which usually eases outside the chore list (more sleep, a lighter week elsewhere). The calculator’s “what would help most” is the single change with the biggest gain: handing about 2 hours a week from Rosemary to Ken would take balance from 0.83 to 1.00, worth 0.067. Naming one more job’s owner would be worth 0.029, and a load lower by 0.10 on average 0.025.

The overall score adds a fourth part, retuning: of the moments that landed badly this week, how many you retuned before answering.

overall = balance $\times$ 0.35 + ownership $\times$ 0.30 + (1 - load) $\times$ 0.20 + retuning $\times$ 0.15
(no rough moments this week: leave retuning out, and divide the first three parts by 0.85)

In Chapter II’s first worked example (balance 0.60, ownership 0.80, an average load of 0.40, and 3 of 5 rough moments retuned): $0.21 + 0.24 + 0.12 + 0.09 = 0.66$.

The 30-day look-back: what shifted this month?

The look-back splits the last 30 days into four weeks (the first takes the first ten days). For each part you filled in (balance, ownership, the load, and last-minute rescues), it compares the start of the month with the end:

start = the average of weeks 1 and 2
end = the average of weeks 3 and 4
it shifted if end - start is 0.10 or more (balance, ownership, load),
or 1 a week or more (rescues); anything smaller didn’t
shift

One next step: a part that moved the wrong way comes first (the biggest move for its size). Otherwise, the first of these that is still true at the end: ownership under 0.70, balance under 0.70, 2 or more rescues a week, or anyone's load at 0.60 or more. If none is, keep the same rhythm and look again in 30 days.

Hours to change hands over the month: for each person, the hours they did minus their share of everyone's hours, added up week by week. Half the sum of those gaps (ignoring the minus signs) is how many hours would change hands to make the month even.

WORKED EXAMPLE Suppose Rosemary and Ken keep going for a month (made up, like them). Their four weeks: hours 14 and 10, 15 and 9, 13 and 11, 12 and 12; jobs with an owner 9, 9, 11 and 11 of 12; Rosemary's load 0.45, 0.50, 0.40, 0.35 and Ken's 0.30 every week; rescues 3, 2, 1, 1.

PART	START (WEEKS 1-2)	END (WEEKS 3-4)	CHANGE	READS AS
Balance	$(0.83 + 0.75) \div 2 = 0.79$	$(0.92 + 1.00) \div 2 = 0.96$	+0.17	Better
Ownership	0.75	0.92	+0.17	Better
Average load	0.39	0.34	-0.05	About the same
Rosemary's own load	0.48	0.38	-0.10	Lighter
Rescues a week	2.5	1	-1.5	Fewer

Three of the four parts shifted, all for the better, and nothing is left on the watch list, so the next step is to keep the rhythm. The setup score went from 0.73 to 0.87. Over the month Rosemary did 54 hours and Ken 42, so 6 hours would have changed hands for an even month.

On your own: is your week sustainable?

The “Who does what?” page’s “just me” view adds up the hours your week is spoken for (jobs, the thinking work, care and so on) and compares them with a waking week of about 112 hours (16 waking hours, 7 days).

share = the hours spoken for ÷ 112

Under 50% reads as sustainable, 50% up to 70% as full but workable, and 70% or more as stretched. A made-up example: 50 hours spoken for is 45%, which leaves real room; 80 hours is 71%, a lot to keep up week after week.

All of these are this book's own ways of putting things into numbers. They have not been tested in research studies, and they shouldn't be quoted as findings. The free calculators on the website do the arithmetic for you, and each one has a "How is this worked out?" note.

Blank worksheets

Photocopy or print these pages, as many times as you like, and fill them in by hand. Each one is a blank copy of a worksheet in the book. The free fillable versions on the website do the sums for you, and keep what you type on your own device.

Who did what

Fillable version:
spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/f
ill/wp-01.html

Write down what actually happened this week, before anyone starts remembering it as a story. Write down only what you did or saw yourself; never fill in someone else's side for them.

Person A

Person B

Week beginning

Part A: Who did what, this week

One row for each task noticed or done, including the invisible ones: remembering, planning, booking, forms. Time spent only thinking, noticing or planning counts too: log it as "Thinking and planning".

Day	Task noticed or done	Who did it	Minutes (rough)	How it came up: asked for, noticed, or thinking time?

This week's totals

Person A: minutes (and %), of which noticed and handled without being asked

Person B: minutes (and %), of which noticed and handled without being asked

Workload balance score: $1 - (A\% - B\%, \text{ ignoring any minus sign}) \div 100 =$

Part B (optional), Kind ways to say no: say why the request is fair, say honestly what you have left, and offer something instead.

Describes how the logged work was split this week, not anyone in it. How the score works: "How the numbers work", at the back.

How much are you carrying?

Fillable version:
spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/f
ill/wp-02.html

Fill this in on your own, about yourself only. Never fill it in for someone else.

Your name

Date

The checklist

Score each row based on how the last 24–48 hours have actually gone. Circle one: 0 = Not at all, 4 = Very true. Living with a long-term illness? Your physical row may always be high. That is load, not a mood.

	Not at all				Very true
Sleep debt (less rested than usual)	0	1	2	3	4
Workload elsewhere (job, school, caregiving)	0	1	2	3	4
Recent unresolved conflict (any source)	0	1	2	3	4
Physical state (hungry, sick, in pain)	0	1	2	3	4
Time pressure today specifically	0	1	2	3	4

Your load score

Points (add the five circled numbers): ____ out of 20

Load score: $\text{points} \div 20 =$ ____ out of 1.00

Higher means a heavier load (and a lower battery). Under 0.30: light. 0.30 to 0.59: medium. 0.60 or more: high. Put off anything that doesn't need deciding in the next hour.

Optional

☐ Some of what I'm carrying is caring for someone

Anything you want to name before talking

A high score is a way to press pause, not a way out. It means “let’s come back to this tomorrow,” not “this doesn’t need to happen.”

One owner per job

Fillable version:
spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/f
ill/wp-03.html

Every regular job gets one owner: the person who does it and sees it through. If you like, add a helper or backup who pitches in, notices if it slips, or covers it on a bad week. List the invisible jobs too: forms, gifts, renewals, planning, appointments.

Date of this list

The split you agreed (optional)

Who owns each job

Job	How often	Owner	Helper or backup (optional)	Size (optional)	Notes

How often: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, As needed, Ongoing. Size: Small, Medium, Big.

Does every job have an owner?

Jobs with an owner: ____ of ____ = ____ out of 1.00

Changes to the list (optional)

Date	What changed	Who

Where we've landed

Agreeing means everyone has read this version and knows who owns what. It doesn't mean every job feels perfectly fair, only that ownership is clear.

☐ We're agreed on this

Who agreed (optional)

Look at this again on (optional)

What keeps coming back?

Fillable version:
spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/f
ill/wp-04.html

A monthly look-back, done together, across four weeks of Who did what and One owner per job. It looks for the tasks that keep slipping. The goal is to find where the setup needs a fix, not to tally what anyone owes.

Month

Part A: Gather the month's notes

List every task that was noticed but not done, or done only after being raised more than once. Mark an **x** for each week it came up.

Task	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Times flagged

Part B: Sort each gap

Sort every task flagged twice or more. A **structural gap** has no clear owner (fix One owner per job now). A **capacity issue** has an owner who can't keep up (set a time for an honest conversation). A **one-off** has a temporary cause (note it and move on).

Task	Named owner on the job list? (Yes / No)	Classification	Action

Part C: Wrap up the audit

Structural gaps found _____ Capacity issues found _____

One-offs _____

Part D (optional): Thanked, or only noticed when it's missed?

Job	Gets thanked (Often / Sometimes / Rarely / Never)	Only noticed when missed? (Yes / No)	One way to notice it

Not a bill for the past, and not a performance review. A task with no owner is a gap in the setup, not a verdict on the person who kept covering it.

Say it so it lands

Fillable version:
spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/f
ill/wp-09.html

A self-check each of you uses on your own side of a conversation. Use it on one thing that actually stung.

Your name

Date

Before you speak or send: fact, feeling, ask

Raw reaction (optional, and just for you)

What's the fact underneath this? (One sentence, no adjectives.) For example: "The bins went out late on Tuesday."

What's the feeling underneath this? (Frustrated, tired, unseen, rushed...) A feeling about you, not a verdict about them.

What's the actual ask? (What do you want to happen next, specifically?) Something the other person can say yes to.

Before you react: four quick checks

Check	Circle one
Is this about a specific, nameable task or event?	Yes · No
Would I read this the same way if I weren't already carrying a lot?	Yes · No · Not sure
Is there a neutral interpretation that also fits what was said?	Yes · No
Am I responding to their words, or to a pattern from a past conversation?	Their words · A past pattern

A "No" or "Not sure" on the second check, a "Yes" on the third or "A past pattern" on the fourth are good reasons to pause first. A kind "not right now" and a time to come back keeps it honest.

The Calm-Down Kit

Fillable version:
spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/f
ill/wp-11.html

A short plan, made ahead of time, for calming your body down enough to have the conversation, or to put it off honestly. Fill in Part A on an ordinary day, not a hard one. Your kit is yours; only the pause plan is made to share.

Whose kit is this? (your name) _____ Date _____

Part A: What tends to start it

What tends to start it	How it shows up in my body first

Part A: My two defaults

Pick two calming steps now: asymmetric breathing (breathe in for 4, out for 6) · naming the room (5 things you see, 4 you hear, 3 you can touch) · weight and pressure (feet pressed flat into the floor, or something warm held in both hands) · gating (cutting noise and light: lower the lights, step out) · walking it out · a low, steady sound.

First default _____ Second, if the first isn't available _____

Part A: My pause line

Say how you are, how long you need, and when you'll be back: "I'm at capacity. I need ten minutes. I'll be back at quarter past."

Our pause plan (agree it together, and share it)

Our pause word or signal _____ The shortest break we take _____

How we set the time to come back _____ The first sentence when we come back _____

Part B, in the moment: say your pause word or line, then do your first calming step.

Part C: Coming back

Still hot? Another round. Twice? Name a new time. Settled enough to listen? Go back at the time you named. (For number fans: your load score, 0 to 1. Under 0.50 go back; 0.50 to 0.59 another round; 0.60 or above after two rounds, put it off.)

Time	What I did	How I feel now (Still hot / Settled enough)	Load before (0-1)	Load after (0-1)

Next small action _____ If you put the conversation off: when you'll pick it back up _____

Where I've landed

☐ I'm going with this

Look at this again on (optional) _____

Nothing in this kit works by cold, pain or shock, and none of it is treatment.

The 90-second daily check-in

Fillable version:
spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/f
ill/wp-13.html

Each person answers each prompt in one sentence, about their own day, and fills in only their own rows. No debating, no solving, no arguing back. Anything that needs a real discussion waits for the weekly catch-up.

Week beginning

Each day

Day	Person	Load (Low / Medium / High)	One thing I appreciated today	One small thing that didn't feel great	One thing that would help tomorrow
Mon					
Mon					
Tue					
Tue					
Wed					
Wed					
Thu					
Thu					
Fri					
Fri					
Sat					
Sat					
Sun					
Sun					

The weekly catch-up (optional)

Skim the week for anything that came up more than twice, and move it to the right worksheet.

Sore spot that keeps coming up	Times this week	Move to (One owner per job / Say it so it lands / Keep watching)

Where we've landed

☐ We're agreed on this

Who agreed (optional)

Look at this again on (optional)

Same moment, different speeds

For a few moments that come round often, each person marks how fast they want to move, how much they want to talk, and how urgent it feels. Each person fills in only their own rows, ideally before looking at the other's. There are no right answers.

Date

Part A: Each person's speed

Speed: right away · within the hour · later the same day · after a night's sleep. Talk: quiet time first · a few words, then act · talk it all through. Urgency: low · medium · high.

Moment	Person	Speed	Talk	Urgency	What helps me (optional)
A plan changes at the last minute					
A bill, letter or form needs dealing with					
Something breaks or goes wrong at home					
One of us is upset about something					
Deciding what to do with free time					

Part B: Where your speeds differ

For each moment, count how many steps apart your answers are on each list. Start with the biggest gap: a difference in pace, not in how much anyone cares.

Part C: One small agreement

Moment	What we'll try	Try it until

Where we've landed

Agreeing means you have both seen the gaps and will try the agreement. It doesn't mean either of you has to change speed for good.

☐ We're agreed on this

Who agreed (optional)

Look at this again on (optional)

Not a compatibility test and not a diagnosis. Run it again every few months, or after a big change.

Is it us, or is it everything else?

Fillable version:
spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/f
ill/wp-14.html

A one-week log that keeps two things apart: pressure from outside (money, work, health, sleep, family) and friction that really starts between you. A line or two each evening, each person about their own day. Write what happened, not who was wrong.

Week beginning _____

Part A: Each evening

Day	Person	Outside pressure today (None / A little / A lot)	Where it came from	A tense moment between us (if any)	Looking back, it was mostly (Outside pressure / Between us / Some of both / Not sure yet)
Mon					
Mon					
Tue					
Tue					
Wed					
Wed					
Thu					
Thu					
Fri					
Fri					
Sat					
Sat					
Sun					
Sun					

Part B: The week at a glance

Tense moments on heavy days: ____ of ____

Part C: What got blamed on the wrong thing?

The moment	What it seemed to be about	What was really going on	What would help next time

Part D: One plan for the pressure

The pressure we're facing right now _____ How we'll flag a heavy day _____

What we'll go easy on until it passes _____ One bit of outside help we could ask for (optional) _____

Outside pressure explains a hard day. It doesn't excuse unkindness, and it doesn't make what anyone felt less real.

Keep your little rituals alive

Fillable version:
spreadloveandacceptance.com/workpapers/f
ill/wp-15.html

Every three months or so, a short look at the small shared habits that keep you close: the morning coffee, the Sunday walk, the birthday breakfast. Nobody is to blame for one that lapsed.

Date

Part A: Our rituals, big and small

How it's doing: Alive (still happening, still means something) · Fading (on autopilot or less often) · Stopped · New idea. How often: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Yearly, Now and then.

Ritual or habit	How often	How it's doing	What it gives us, or what got in the way

Part C: One to restart, or start

The ritual	The smallest version that still counts
The first time: when, and who will suggest it	What would make it easy to skip, and how we'll protect it (optional)

Part D (optional): One to let go, with thanks

The ritual	What it gave us
------------	-----------------

Where we've landed

☐ We're agreed on this

Who agreed (optional)

Look at this again on (optional)

A ritual is something you would both miss, not a test of love. Look at this sheet again in about three months.

Words used in this book

The book's own words, each in one plain sentence. More at spreadloveandacceptance.com/glossary.

Backstop

The second name on a job: someone who notices if it slipped and checks in kindly. Not a supervisor. A job counts as owned once it has an owner; the backstop is a good habit on top.

Battery

Your battery is how much energy you have left today. Full means you have room to spare; low means you're running on empty. "How much are you carrying?" measures the other side of it, your load: a higher load score means a heavier load, and a lower battery.

For example: After a poor night and a long workday, your load score is high and your battery is low, so a small request feels big.

Calm-Down Kit

The Calm-Down Kit is your own short list of what settles your body, chosen ahead of time so you don't have to think when you're wound up.

For example: A glass of cold water, a walk to the corner, and three long breaths out.

Check-in

A check-in is a short, planned talk that keeps small things small. The daily one takes about ninety seconds, with no debating.

For example: "Load today: heavy. Thank you for the dishes. One small thing: the car. My ask: could you fill it up?"

Complacency

Complacency is what happens when something has worked for a long time and you stop checking on it. It isn't laziness or a lack of love. It's a setup nobody has looked at lately.

For example: "How was your day?" "Fine." Months go by and nobody has asked a real question.

Drift

Drift is how two people slowly fall out of step when nobody checks in, even when nothing is wrong.

For example: Three busy weeks, no real talk, and small things start to feel big.

Flooded

Flooded means being so wound up that listening stops working for a while. The kind thing is a short pause with a time to come back.

For example: "I need twenty minutes. Can we talk again at eight?"

Frequency

Your frequency is your natural pace: how fast you decide, talk, reply and recover.

For example: One person answers a text in a minute; the other answers at the end of the day. Neither is wrong.

Gatekeeping

Holding on to how a home or child-care job must be done, so the other person steps back. Researchers first described it in mothers ("maternal gatekeeping"), but anyone can do it.

Kinship care

When a grandparent, aunt, older sibling or family friend raises a child whose parents can't.

The ladder

Three everyday states: calm and connected, revved up, running on empty. My weather today calls them clear, gusty and fogged in. A best guess about your state, not a measurement.

Ledger

A notebook where you write down what happened, so you can look at it calmly later. The book works the same way: see what is really going on, without blame, then change one small thing.

The load

The load is all the work of a shared life, including the thinking, planning and remembering that nobody sees.

For example: Buying the gift is one job. Remembering the birthday, picking the gift and wrapping it are three more.

Mental load

The noticing, planning and remembering behind running a shared life: knowing the shoes are too small, booking the appointment, keeping the list. It is real work, even though nobody sees it.

My weather today

My weather today is a one-minute check on your own conditions today, like sleep, stress and energy: Clear means calm and connected, Gusty means revved up, and Fogged in means running on empty.

For example: Short night, busy day: the forecast says to keep big talks for tomorrow.

Owner (one owner per job)

The owner of a job is the one person who makes sure it gets done from start to finish, so nobody has to keep asking.

For example: Sam owns the recycling: noticing it's full, taking it out and buying the bags.

Parallel parenting

Co-parenting with as little direct contact as possible: each home runs its own way, and messages stay short, polite and about the children.

Pressure

Pressure, in My weather today, is how much you were already carrying today: light, building or heavy. Behind the forecast sits a rough tally from 0 to 100; under 45 leaves room in the day, 65 or more means go gently. It is a reading of what you told it, not a score or a grade.

For example: A pressure of 40 leaves room in the day; 75 means go gently and leave big things for later.

Retune

To retune is to notice you've fallen out of step with someone and adjust together: slower, softer, or at a better time.

For example: "Can we start that again? I came in too fast."

Second arrow

The extra pain we add on top of a hard moment, such as being angry at ourselves for being sad. The first arrow is the event; the second is what we tell ourselves about it (a Buddhist image).

Setup score

The one number from Is the setup working for everyone?: balance, ownership and stress added up with weights (0.40, 0.35 and 0.25), from 0 to 1. 0.70 and up is working well, 0.40 to 0.69 needs a look, under 0.40 needs a rethink, together. It judges the setup, never a person.

Static

Static is the crackle between two people when the words are fine but the tone, pace or timing doesn't match.

For example: You ask "When will you do it?" calmly. They hear pressure. Nobody meant harm, but it crackles.

Stress tank

How much stress you are already carrying, from How much are you carrying?: a load score from 0 (empty) to 1 (full). Under 0.30 is low, 0.30 to 0.59 moderate, 0.60 and up high. A fuller tank means less room to take more on. (Your battery is the other side of it: energy left.)

Talk window

The talk window says whether now is a good time for a big conversation: open, wait a little, or closed for today.

For example: Your window says "wait," so you ask to talk after dinner instead of right now.

Unbilled debt

Unbilled debt is the work of a shared life that got done but was never noticed or thanked.

For example: You remembered the dentist appointment, and nobody knew there was anything to remember.

Wiring

Your wiring is the way your brain and senses take in words, sound, change and people. It stays the same from day to day.

For example: Some people need a plan in writing. Others think best out loud.

Workpaper

A workpaper is a short worksheet. Each person fills in their own, then you read them together.

For example: "Who did what" is a week's log of who did what.

Your lens

Your lens is the set of understandings about yourself, other people and what they owe you that you picked up growing up and still use without noticing.

For example: "Rest is earned" can feel like plain fact, until you notice it was your family's rule.

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Research notes

The 83 studies and books the chapters mention, chapter by chapter, each with what it found in plain words and where to read it. Each entry was looked up and checked: most against the paper itself or its abstract, some (mostly older books) against a publisher's or library's record. Unchecked works are left out. The full list, with notes on how strong each finding is, is at spreadloveandacceptance.com/research.

Reading research: a few words in plain English

The chapters often say how sure the research is: “a small study”, “linked with”, “didn’t replicate”. Here is what those words mean, so every note in the book is something you can weigh for yourself.

Correlational (“linked with”)

Two things tend to go together: people who sleep less tend to argue more. It doesn’t show which causes which, or whether a third thing, like a new baby, causes both.

Experiment

Researchers change one thing on purpose, ideally deciding by chance who gets it, and compare. Better at showing cause, though often in a lab, for a short time, with a small group.

Meta-analysis

A study of studies: it pools many studies of the same question. Usually more trustworthy than any one study, but only as good as the studies in it.

Replication

Doing a study again to see if the result holds. When a large team re-ran 100 published psychology studies in 2015, only about a third gave a clear result again, and the effects were on average about half as big. So one study is a start, not the end.

Effect size

How big a difference is, not just whether there is one. A result can be real (“significant”) and still tiny. The book says “small” or “modest” when that is the case.

Who was studied

Much of psychology studies students in Western, educated, well-off countries. A finding may not fit every age, culture or kind of family, and many studies of couples looked only at a mother and a father.

Self-report

People answered questions about themselves. That is often the only way to ask about feelings, but memory and wanting to look good both creep in.

How the book labels things: a Research note describes published findings in plain words and says where the evidence is thin. This site's idea marks the book's own ways of putting things into practice, such as the worksheets and the setup score, which have not been tested in studies. The full list at spreadloveandacceptance.com/research also says how strong each finding is: strong, moderate or early.

PREFACE TO PART TWO

The work nobody sees

Allen, S. M., & Hawkins, A. J. (1999). *Maternal gatekeeping: Mothers' beliefs and behaviors that inhibit greater father involvement in family work.* Journal of Marriage and the Family, 61(1), 199–212. Defined maternal gatekeeping along three dimensions and, in 622 dual-earner mothers, classified about one in five as gatekeepers; they did more family work each week and had less equal divisions of labour.
doi.org/10.2307/353894

Clark, M. S., & Mills, J. (1979). *Interpersonal attraction in exchange and communal relationships.* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37(1), 12–24. Distinguished communal relationships (benefits given in response to needs) from exchange relationships (benefits given in return for benefits). When people wanted a communal relationship, being repaid in kind reduced attraction.
clarkrelationshiplab.yale.edu

Cowan, C. P., & Cowan, P. A. (1992). *When Partners Become Parents: The Big Life Change for Couples.* BasicBooks (New York); reissued 1999 (Erlbaum) and 2011. Based on the Becoming a Family Project, a long-term study of expectant couples, describes how strain and conflict between partners commonly rise across the transition to parenthood, and tests couples groups as prevention.
openlibrary.org/works/OL92708W

Daminger, A. (2019). *The cognitive dimension of household labor.* American Sociological Review, 84(4), 609–633. Interviews with 35 couples (70 interviews) identified four parts of household “cognitive labour”: anticipating needs, identifying options, deciding, and monitoring. Women did more of it overall, especially anticipating and monitoring; deciding was shared more equally. The work was often unseen by both partners.
doi.org/10.1177/0003122419859007

Darley, J. M., & Latané, B. (1968). *Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility.* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 8(4), 377–383. Participants who believed others could also hear a person having a seizure were slower and less likely to help; the presence of others reduced each person's sense of responsibility.
doi.org/10.1037/h0025589

di Leonardo, M. (1987). *The female world of cards and holidays: Women, families, and the work of kinship.* Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 12(3), 440–453. Named “kin work”: the cards, calls, visits, gifts and gatherings that keep extended families connected. In the families she studied, it was done mostly by women and often treated as effortless.
doi.org/10.1086/494338

Doss, B. D., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2009). *The effect of the transition to parenthood on relationship quality: An 8-year prospective study.* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96(3), 601–619. Following 218 couples over the first eight years of marriage, those who had a first child showed sudden declines in relationship quality after the birth, on average, compared with couples who did not.
doi.org/10.1037/a0013969

Gordon, A. M., Impett, E. A., Kogan, A., Oveis, C., & Keltner, D. (2012). *To have and to hold: Gratitude promotes relationship maintenance in intimate bonds*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 103(2), 257–274. People who felt more appreciated by their romantic partners were more appreciative of their partners in return, and appreciation was linked with relationship maintenance and commitment.
doi.org/10.1037/a0028723

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press (reissued 2003, 2012). Coined “emotional labour” from a study of flight attendants (and bill collectors) trained to display feelings at work; distinguished surface acting from deep acting.
search.worldcat.org/title/9280843

Hochschild, A. R., with Machung, A. (1989). *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. Viking Penguin (updated edition 2012, Penguin Books). Interviews and home observations of dual-earner couples with young children found that working mothers did much more of the housework and childcare, adding up to a large extra load over a year; many couples told themselves stories that the split was fair.
penguinrandomhouse.com

Kurdek, L. A. (2007). *The allocation of household labor by partners in gay and lesbian couples*. *Journal of Family Issues*, 28(1), 132–148. Among 43 gay and 36 lesbian couples where both partners worked full-time, household tasks were divided more evenly than is typical in heterosexual couples, often by negotiation and specialisation rather than gender.
doi.org/10.1177/0192513X06292019

Ross, L., & Ward, A. (1996). *Naive realism in everyday life: Implications for social conflict and misunderstanding*. In E. S. Reed, E. Turiel, & T. Brown (Eds.), *Values and Knowledge* (pp. 103–135). Lawrence Erlbaum / Psychology Press. Described naive realism: people assume they see the world objectively, so those who disagree must be uninformed, irrational or biased — a dynamic that fuels conflict and misunderstanding.
doi.org/10.4324/9780203773772-6

Ross, M., & Sicol, F. (1979). *Egocentric biases in availability and attribution*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37(3), 322–336. In five experiments (married couples, groups, basketball teams), people recalled more of their own contributions to joint work and took more responsibility than others gave them; spouses' estimates of their own shares typically summed to more than 100 percent.
doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.37.3.322

Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., Brown, G. L., Cannon, E. A., Mangelsdorf, S. C., & Sokolowski, M. S. (2008). *Maternal gatekeeping, coparenting quality, and fathering behavior in families with infants*. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(3), 389–398. In 97 couples with infants, fathers were more involved in day-to-day care when mothers actively encouraged them (gate-opening); when mothers were highly critical (gate-closing), fathers' own beliefs about involvement mattered less.
doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.22.3.389

Yavorsky, J. E., Kamp Dush, C. M., & Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J. (2015). *The production of inequality: The gender division of labor across the transition to parenthood*. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77(3), 662–679. Time-diary data from dual-earner couples showed a gender gap in total work opening up after a first baby: mothers took on most of the added childcare without cutting their paid hours; survey reports overstated how equal things were.
doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12189

Why we get out of tune

Bryant, C. M., Conger, R. D., & Meehan, J. M. (2001). *The influence of in-laws on change in marital success.* *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(3), 614–626. Following couples for several years, found that conflict and poorer relationships with in-laws predicted later declines in marital success (stability, satisfaction and commitment).
doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2001.00614.x

Carrère, S., & Gottman, J. M. (1999). *Predicting divorce among newlyweds from the first three minutes of a marital conflict discussion.* *Family Process*, 38(3), 293–301. In 124 newlywed couples, how the first three minutes of a conflict discussion went (more negative and less positive emotion) predicted which couples divorced over the next six years.
doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.1999.00293.x

Gilovich, T., Savitsky, K., & Medvec, V. H. (1998). *The illusion of transparency: Biased assessments of others' ability to read one's emotional states.* *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75(2), 332–346. In several sets of studies, people overestimated how well others could read their internal states (for example, liars overestimated how detectable their lies were, and people thought their disgust showed more than it did).
doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.75.2.332

Gordon, T. (1970). *P.E.T.: Parent Effectiveness Training.* New York: P. H. Wyden (book; revised 2000). A parenting book and course that popularised “I-messages”: describing your own feelings and the effect of a behaviour rather than blaming the other person.
search.worldcat.org/title/670595

Gottman, J. M. (1994). *What predicts divorce? The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (Hillsdale, NJ); reissued by Routledge. Gottman's report of his long-term studies of couples, including “flooding”: feeling so physically overwhelmed in a conflict that listening and thinking become very hard.
routledge.com

Kruger, J., Epley, N., Parker, J., & Ng, Z.-W. (2005). *Egocentrism over e-mail: Can we communicate as well as we think?* *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(6), 925–936. Across five experiments, people overestimated how well email recipients would detect their tone (such as sarcasm or seriousness), partly because they found it hard to step outside their own perspective.
doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.6.925

Lally, P., van Jaarsveld, C. H. M., Potts, H. W. W., & Wardle, J. (2010). *How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world.* *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 40(6), 998–1009. Following 96 volunteers who repeated a daily behaviour in the same context for 12 weeks, automaticity rose along a curve that levelled off; reaching 95% of each person's plateau took between 18 and 254 days, and missing a single day did not meaningfully set progress back.
doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.674

Lambert, N. M., Fincham, F. D., Stillman, T. F., Graham, S. M., & Beach, S. R. H. (2010). *Motivating change in relationships: Can prayer increase forgiveness?* *Psychological Science*, 21(1), 126–132. In two small experiments with students, people asked to pray for a romantic partner (study 1) or for a friend daily for four weeks (study 2) reported more willingness to forgive that person than people in comparison conditions; in study 2 this went with a rise in selfless concern.
doi.org/10.1177/0956797609355634

Lieberman, M. D., Eisenberger, N. I., Crockett, M. J., Tom, S. M., Pfeifer, J. H., & Way, B. M. (2007). *Putting feelings into words: Affect labeling disrupts amygdala activity in response to affective stimuli.* *Psychological Science*, 18(5), 421–428. In a brain-imaging study, labelling the emotion in a picture reduced amygdala and other limbic responses compared with other ways of processing the image.
doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01916.x

Mahoney, A. (2010). *Religion in families*, 1999–2009: A relational spirituality framework. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72(4), 805–827. Reviewed a decade of peer-reviewed studies on religion in marriage and parent–child relationships, “for better and worse”, organising them by how faith may help form, maintain and change family relationships; faith can strengthen family life and can also be a source of strain.
doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2010.00732.x

Milton, D. E. M. (2012). *On the ontological status of autism: The “double empathy problem”*. *Disability & Society*, 27(6), 883–887. A short conceptual paper arguing that misunderstanding between autistic and non-autistic people runs both ways: each side finds the other hard to read, so the problem lies between them, not only in the autistic person.
autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/double-empathy

Rosenberg, M. B. (1999). *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion (later editions: A Language of Life)*. PuddleDancer Press (Encinitas, CA); 2nd ed. 2003, 3rd ed. 2015. Describes Nonviolent Communication: expressing observations, feelings, needs and requests, and listening for the same in others.
vufind.lboro.ac.uk/Record/562413

Ross, L. (1977). *The intuitive psychologist and his shortcomings: Distortions in the attribution process*. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 10, 173–220. Reviewed the biases of the lay ‘intuitive psychologist’ and named the fundamental attribution error: underestimating situational causes and overestimating personal dispositions when explaining others’ behaviour.
doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60357-3

Savitsky, K., Keysar, B., Epley, N., Carter, T., & Swanson, A. (2011). *The closeness–communication bias: Increased egocentrism among friends versus strangers*. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 47(1), 269–273. In three experiments, people overestimated how well they communicated with friends and spouses, more than with strangers, and made more egocentric errors following a friend’s directions; closeness seemed to relax the checking people do with strangers.
sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0022103110002118

Yoo, S.-S., Gujar, N., Hu, P., Jolesz, F. A., & Walker, M. P. (2007). *The human emotional brain without sleep—a prefrontal amygdala disconnect*. *Current Biology*, 17(20), R877–R878. After a night without sleep, the amygdala reacted more strongly to negative pictures and was less connected to the prefrontal cortex.
doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2007.08.007

PART TWO • CHAPTER II

Is the split working?

Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). *A global measure of perceived stress*. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24(4), 385–396. Introduced the Perceived Stress Scale, a short questionnaire about how unpredictable, uncontrollable and overloaded your life has felt lately; scores went with symptoms of depression and illness.
doi.org/10.2307/2136404

Cowan, C. P., & Cowan, P. A. (1992). *When Partners Become Parents: The Big Life Change for Couples*. BasicBooks (New York); reissued 1999 (Erlbaum) and 2011. Based on the Becoming a Family Project, a long-term study of expectant couples, describes how strain and conflict between partners commonly rise across the transition to parenthood, and tests couples groups as prevention.
openlibrary.org/works/OL92708W

Daminger, A. (2019). *The cognitive dimension of household labor.* American Sociological Review, 84(4), 609–633. Interviews with 35 couples (70 interviews) identified four parts of household “cognitive labour”: anticipating needs, identifying options, deciding, and monitoring. Women did more of it overall, especially anticipating and monitoring; deciding was shared more equally. The work was often unseen by both partners.
doi.org/10.1177/0003122419859007

Darley, J. M., & Latané, B. (1968). *Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility.* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 8(4), 377–383. Participants who believed others could also hear a person having a seizure were slower and less likely to help; the presence of others reduced each person's sense of responsibility.
doi.org/10.1037/h0025589

di Leonardo, M. (1987). *The female world of cards and holidays: Women, families, and the work of kinship.* Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 12(3), 440–453. Named “kin work”: the cards, calls, visits, gifts and gatherings that keep extended families connected. In the families she studied, it was done mostly by women and often treated as effortless.
doi.org/10.1086/494338

Doss, B. D., Rhoades, G. K., Stanley, S. M., & Markman, H. J. (2009). *The effect of the transition to parenthood on relationship quality: An 8-year prospective study.* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96(3), 601–619. Following 218 couples over the first eight years of marriage, those who had a first child showed sudden declines in relationship quality after the birth, on average, compared with couples who did not.
doi.org/10.1037/a0013969

Feinberg, M. E., & Kan, M. L. (2008). *Establishing Family Foundations: Intervention effects on coparenting, parent/infant well-being, and parent-child relations.* Journal of Family Psychology, 22(2), 253–263. A randomised trial with 169 expectant first-time couples found that the Family Foundations classes, delivered before and after birth, improved coparenting and some aspects of parent and infant wellbeing at follow-up.
doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.22.2.253

Goodhart, C. A. E. (1975). *Problems of monetary management: The U.K. experience.* Paper presented at the Conference in Monetary Economics, Sydney, July 1975; published in Papers in Monetary Economics, Vol. I (Reserve Bank of Australia, 1976); reprinted in Goodhart, Monetary Theory and Practice (Macmillan, 1984). The original source of “Goodhart's law”: a statistical regularity tends to break down once authorities put pressure on it for control purposes.

rba.gov.au/publications/rdp/1990/9013/conference-volumes.html

Hochschild, A. R., with Machung, A. (1989). *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home.* Viking Penguin (updated edition 2012, Penguin Books). Interviews and home observations of dual-earner couples with young children found that working mothers did much more of the housework and childcare, adding up to a large extra load over a year; many couples told themselves stories that the split was fair.
penguinrandomhouse.com

Kurdek, L. A. (2007). *The allocation of household labor by partners in gay and lesbian couples.* Journal of Family Issues, 28(1), 132–148. Among 43 gay and 36 lesbian couples where both partners worked full-time, household tasks were divided more evenly than is typical in heterosexual couples, often by negotiation and specialisation rather than gender.
doi.org/10.1177/0192513X06292019

Ross, M., & Sicol, F. (1979). *Egocentric biases in availability and attribution.* Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37(3), 322–336. In five experiments (married couples, groups, basketball teams), people recalled more of their own contributions to joint work and took more responsibility than others gave them; spouses' estimates of their own shares typically summed to more than 100 percent.
doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.37.3.322

Strathern, M. (1997). ‘Improving ratings’: Audit in the British University system. European Review, 5(3), 305–321. Anthropological commentary on the “audit explosion” in British universities; widely credited as the source of the popular phrasing of Goodhart's law (when a measure becomes a target, it stops being a good measure).
cambridge.org

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (annual, since 2003). *American Time Use Survey (ATUS)*. Federal survey (conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau). The federal survey of how, where and with whom Americans spend their time, including unpaid housework and childcare; it has run every year since 2003.

bls.gov/tus

Yavorsky, J. E., Kamp Dush, C. M., & Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J. (2015). *The production of inequality: The gender division of labor across the transition to parenthood*. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77(3), 662–679. Time-diary data from dual-earner couples showed a gender gap in total work opening up after a first baby: mothers took on most of the added childcare without cutting their paid hours; survey reports overstated how equal things were.

doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12189

PART TWO • CHAPTER III

Full tanks and different angles

Amato, P. R. (2001). *Children of divorce in the 1990s: An update of the Amato and Keith (1991) meta-analysis*. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(3), 355–370. Updated a meta-analysis comparing children of divorced and continuously married parents; differences in wellbeing were small on average and persisted in studies from the 1990s.

doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.15.3.355

Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). *A global measure of perceived stress*. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24(4), 385–396. Introduced the Perceived Stress Scale, a short questionnaire about how unpredictable, uncontrollable and overloaded your life has felt lately; scores went with symptoms of depression and illness.

doi.org/10.2307/2136404

Emery, R. E. (1982). *Interparental conflict and the children of discord and divorce*. *Psychological Bulletin*, 92(2), 310–330. Reviewed evidence that conflict between parents, in married and divorced families, is linked to children's problems, and that the amount and type of conflict matter.

doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.92.2.310

Gottman, J. M. (1994). *What predicts divorce? The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (Hillsdale, NJ); reissued by Routledge. Gottman's report of his long-term studies of couples, including “flooding”: feeling so physically overwhelmed in a conflict that listening and thinking become very hard.

routledge.com

Hetherington, E. M., & Kelly, J. (2002). *For Better or For Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*. W. W. Norton. Drawing on long-term studies of about 1,400 families, argues that most children of divorce and remarriage turn out reasonably well, with outcomes varying widely.

www.norton.co.uk/books/9780393324136-for-better-or-for-worse

Jones, E. E., & Nisbett, R. E. (1971). *The actor and the observer: Divergent perceptions of the causes of behavior*. General Learning Press (short monograph). Proposed the actor-observer hypothesis: people tend to explain their own actions by the situation and others' actions by their dispositions.

krimdok.uni-tuebingen.de/Record/1098932900

Maccoby, E. E., & Mnookin, R. H. (1992). *Dividing the Child: Social and Legal Dilemmas of Custody*. Harvard University Press. Following more than a thousand separating families for three years, described three patterns of co-parenting among families where children spent time in both homes: cooperative, conflicted and disengaged; most parents avoided legal battles but many found it hard to cooperate.

hls.harvard.edu

Neff, K. D. (2003). *Self-compassion: An alternative conceptualization of a healthy attitude toward oneself*. *Self and Identity*, 2(2), 85–101. Defined self-compassion as three parts: self-kindness instead of harsh judgement, common humanity instead of isolation, and mindfulness instead of over-identifying with painful feelings.

doi.org/10.1080/15298860309032

Neff, L. A., & Karney, B. R. (2009). Stress and reactivity to daily relationship experiences: How stress hinders adaptive processes in marriage. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(3), 435–450. Spouses under more stress outside the relationship reacted more strongly to everyday negative experiences within it.

doi.org/10.1037/a0015663

Papernow, P. L. (2013). *Surviving and Thriving in Stepfamily Relationships: What Works and What Doesn't*. Routledge. Describes “stepfamily architecture” and five common challenges it creates, drawing on research and clinical experience; closeness between stepfamily members typically builds slowly.

routledge.com

Ross, L., & Ward, A. (1996). Naive realism in everyday life: Implications for social conflict and misunderstanding. In E. S. Reed, E. Turiel, & T. Brown (Eds.), *Values and Knowledge* (pp. 103–135). Lawrence Erlbaum / Psychology Press. Described naive realism: people assume they see the world objectively, so those who disagree must be uninformed, irrational or biased — a dynamic that fuels conflict and misunderstanding.

doi.org/10.4324/9780203773772-6

PART TWO · CHAPTER IV

Two kinds of fair

Adams, J. S. (1965). *Inequity in social exchange*. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, pp. 267–299. Academic Press. Founding statement of equity theory: people compare the ratio of what they put in to what they get out with someone else's, and feel tension when the ratios differ.

[doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60108-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60108-2)

Allen, S. M., & Hawkins, A. J. (1999). *Maternal gatekeeping: Mothers' beliefs and behaviors that inhibit greater father involvement in family work*. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61(1), 199–212. Defined maternal gatekeeping along three dimensions and, in 622 dual-earner mothers, classified about one in five as gatekeepers; they did more family work each week and had less equal divisions of labour.

doi.org/10.2307/353894

Darley, J. M., & Latané, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8(4), 377–383. Participants who believed others could also hear a person having a seizure were slower and less likely to help; the presence of others reduced each person's sense of responsibility.

doi.org/10.1037/h0025589

Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the Crisis*. MIT Press (Center for Advanced Engineering Study), Cambridge, MA. Deming's case for quality management, arguing that most problems come from the system people work in rather than from individual workers.

eploes.lib2.uniwa.gr/Record/lib2_1%2F6426/Details?lng=el

Deutsch, M. (1975). *Equity, equality, and need: What determines which value will be used as the basis of distributive justice?* *Journal of Social Issues*, 31(3), 137–149. Argued that equity is only one of several justice principles, alongside equality and need, and proposed when groups favour each: equality in cooperative relationships, equity in economic ones, need in caring ones.

data.gesis.org/gesiskg/resource/zis-Deutsch1975Equity

Dew, J., Britt, S., & Huston, S. (2012). *Examining the relationship between financial issues and divorce*. *Family Relations*, 61(4), 615–628. In US national survey data on about 4,500 couples, financial disagreements were the strongest of the disagreement types in predicting later divorce, for both wives and husbands.

doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2012.00715.x

Gottman, J. M. (1994). *What predicts divorce? The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes.* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (Hillsdale, NJ); reissued by Routledge. Gottman's report of his long-term studies of couples, including "flooding": feeling so physically overwhelmed in a conflict that listening and thinking become very hard.
routledge.com

Klontz, B., Britt, S. L., Mentzer, J., & Klontz, T. (2011). Money beliefs and financial behaviors: Development of the Klontz Money Script Inventory. *Journal of Financial Therapy*, 2(1), 1–22. In 422 respondents, beliefs about money clustered into four "money scripts" (money avoidance, money worship, money status and money vigilance), several of which were linked with income and net worth.
doi.org/10.4148/jft.v2i1.451

Kruger, J., Epley, N., Parker, J., & Ng, Z.-W. (2005). *Egocentrism over e-mail: Can we communicate as well as we think?* *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89(6), 925–936. Across five experiments, people overestimated how well email recipients would detect their tone (such as sarcasm or seriousness), partly because they found it hard to step outside their own perspective.
doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.6.925

Lieberman, M. D., Eisenberger, N. I., Crockett, M. J., Tom, S. M., Pfeifer, J. H., & Way, B. M. (2007). Putting feelings into words: Affect labeling disrupts amygdala activity in response to affective stimuli. *Psychological Science*, 18(5), 421–428. In a brain-imaging study, labelling the emotion in a picture reduced amygdala and other limbic responses compared with other ways of processing the image.
doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01916.x

Papp, L. M., Cummings, E. M., & Goeke-Morey, M. C. (2009). For richer, for poorer: Money as a topic of marital conflict in the home. *Family Relations*, 58(1), 91–103. In home diary records of marital conflict, money was not the most frequent topic, but money conflicts were more pervasive, problematic and recurrent than other conflicts and more likely to stay unresolved.
doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2008.00537.x

Rick, S. I., Small, D. A., & Finkel, E. J. (2011). *Fatal (fiscal) attraction: Spendthrifts and tightwads in marriage.* *Journal of Marketing Research*, 48(2), 228–237. Tightwads and spendthrifts tend to marry each other; the bigger the difference within a couple, the more conflict over money, which in turn predicts lower marital wellbeing.
doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.48.2.228

Ross, M., & Sicoly, F. (1979). *Egocentric biases in availability and attribution.* *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37(3), 322–336. In five experiments (married couples, groups, basketball teams), people recalled more of their own contributions to joint work and took more responsibility than others gave them; spouses' estimates of their own shares typically summed to more than 100 percent.
doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.37.3.322

Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., Brown, G. L., Cannon, E. A., Mangelsdorf, S. C., & Sokolowski, M. S. (2008). *Maternal gatekeeping, coparenting quality, and fathering behavior in families with infants.* *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(3), 389–398. In 97 couples with infants, fathers were more involved in day-to-day care when mothers actively encouraged them (gate-opening); when mothers were highly critical (gate-closing), fathers' own beliefs about involvement mattered less.
doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.22.3.389

Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (1999). *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most.* Viking (New York); 10th-anniversary edition, Penguin 2010. A practitioner book from the Harvard Negotiation Project describing three conversations inside every hard conversation (what happened, feelings, identity) and the gap between intent and impact.
penguinrandomhouse.com

Taylor, M. J., McNicholas, C., Nicolay, C., Darzi, A., Bell, D., & Reed, J. E. (2014). *Systematic review of the application of the plan-do-study-act method to improve quality in healthcare.* *BMJ Quality & Safety*, 23(4), 290–298. Of 73 healthcare articles reporting the use of plan-do-study-act cycles, most did not report key features of the method, such as iterative cycles, small tests of change and real-time data.
doi.org/10.1136/bmjqs-2013-001862

Thibaut, J., & Walker, L. (1975). *Procedural Justice: A Psychological Analysis*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (Hillsdale, NJ). Founded procedural-justice research: people's judgments of whether a decision process is fair (especially having a voice) shape how satisfied they are with the outcome.
law.virginia.edu/node/127096

PART TWO • CHAPTER V

The monthly look-back

Boss, P. (1999). *Ambiguous loss: Learning to live with unresolved grief*. Harvard University Press. Named "ambiguous loss": losses without clear closure, such as someone physically absent but psychologically present, or present but psychologically changed (as in dementia), and suggested ways to cope.

bookshare.org/browse/book/2050897

Darley, J. M., & Latané, B. (1968). *Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8(4), 377–383. Participants who believed others could also hear a person having a seizure were slower and less likely to help; the presence of others reduced each person's sense of responsibility.

doi.org/10.1037/h0025589

Dekker, S. (2007). *Just Culture: Balancing Safety and Accountability*. Ashgate (2nd ed. 2012). Argues for a "just culture" that separates honest mistakes from reckless behaviour, and that who draws the line matters as much as where it is drawn.

relbib.de/Record/1613173431

Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the Crisis*. MIT Press (Center for Advanced Engineering Study), Cambridge, MA. Deming's case for quality management, arguing that most problems come from the system people work in rather than from individual workers.

eploes.lib2.uniwa.gr/Record/lib2_1%2F6426/Details?lng=el

Goodhart, C. A. E. (1975). *Problems of monetary management: The U.K. experience*. Paper presented at the Conference in Monetary Economics, Sydney, July 1975; published in *Papers in Monetary Economics*, Vol. I (Reserve Bank of Australia, 1976); reprinted in Goodhart, *Monetary Theory and Practice* (Macmillan, 1984). The original source of "Goodhart's law": a statistical regularity tends to break down once authorities put pressure on it for control purposes.

rba.gov.au/publications/rdp/1990/9013/conference-volumes.html

Hayslip, B., Jr., & Kaminski, P. L. (2005). *Grandparents raising their grandchildren: A review of the literature and suggestions for practice*. *The Gerontologist*, 45(2), 262–269. Reviewed research on custodial grandparents: the costs and benefits of raising a grandchild, how varied these families are, their need for social support, parenting, and help at several levels.

doi.org/10.1093/geront/45.2.262

Pillemer, K. (2020). *Fault Lines: Fractured Families and How to Mend Them*. Avery (Penguin Random House). Draws on the Cornell Reconciliation Project, including a national survey on estrangement and interviews, to show family estrangement is more common than people assume and that some people reconcile.

search.worldcat.org/oclc/1145305518

Reason, J. (1990). *Human Error*. Cambridge University Press. A theory of human error that sorts slips, lapses and mistakes, and introduced the layered-defences thinking behind the "Swiss cheese" model of accidents.

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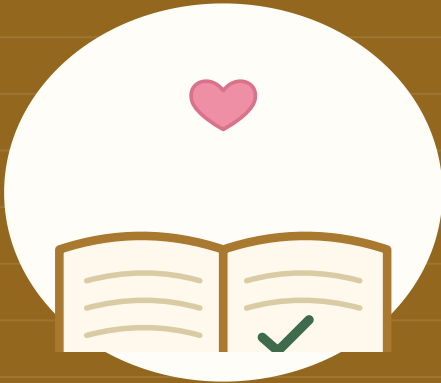
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