

Chapter 6: Emotions Checklist

Emotions Checklist

Happy

At ease	Comfortable	Playful	Joyful	Optimistic
Spirited	Satisfied	Cheerful	Grateful	Proud
Wonderful	Pleased	Inspired	Calm	Alive
Hopeful	Blissful	Lighthearted	Serene	Awe
Energetic	Well-Being	Glad	Elated	Content
Peaceful	Excited	Relaxed	Exhilarated	Delighted
Ecstatic	Humorous	Thankful		

Secure

Adept	Composed	Inspired	Cocky	Worthy
Capable	Condescending	Savvy	Together	Brave
Independent	Privileged	Thoughtful	Competent	Affirmed
Lovable	Strong	Successful	Important	Appeased
Self-reliant	Arrogant	Courageous	Invulnerable	Forgiven
Adequate	Confident	Invincible	Self-Assured	Redeemed
Relieved	Vindicated			

Loved

Accepted	Desired	Revered	Favored	Idolized
Belonging	Admired	Wanted	Understood	Validated
Included	Cherished	Adored	Appreciated	
Respected	Valued	Desirable		

Loving

Affectionate	Adoring	Infatuated	Concerned	Warm
Attracted	Desirous	Forgiving	Empathic	Yearning
Fond	Lustful	Caring	Tender	Enchanted
Longing	Trusting	Compassionate	Liking	Connected

Interested

Absorbed	Intrigued	Fervent	Engrossed	Dedicated
Challenged	Addicted	Motivated	Focused	Compelled
Determined	Committed	Anticipating	Resolute	Enthusiastic
Fascinated	Eager	Curious	Ardent	Intent
Passionate				

Unhappy

Agonized	Disheartened	Lonely	Sad	Needy
Discontented	Down	Regretful	Despondent	Dismayed
Hurt	Confused	Tortured	Worn down	Despairing
Negative	Sullen	Dark	Remorseful	Dissatisfied
Anguished	Blue	Melancholy	Miserable	Gloomy
Alone	Pessimistic	Low	Detached	Heartbroken
Discouraged	Defeated	Empty	Moody	Depressed
Pained	Depleted	Withdrawn	Disappointed	Somber
Stubborn	Hopeless	Stressed	Disorganized	Helpless
Rushed	Overwhelmed	Pressured	Burdened	Grief ridden
Worn out	Devastated	Powerless	Guilty	

Insecure

Awkward	Baffled	Bewildered	Impotent	Ashamed
Inferior	Disoriented	Embarrassed	Foolish	Inadequate
Indecisive	Lost	Puzzled	Silly	Invisible
Weak	Torn	Uncertain	Uneasy	Jealous
Uncomfortable	Pathetic	Unsure	Worthless	Envious
Useless	Unlovable	Insignificant	Repulsive	Fragile

Unloved

Abandoned	Misunderstood	Discarded	Victimized	Shamed
Criticized	Rejected	Disrespected	Betrayed	Isolated
Hated	Alienated	Overlooked	Disparaged	Vulnerable
Lonely	Deserted	Used	Labeled	Alone
Singled out	Ignored	Belittled	Humiliated	Ridiculed
Aching	Oppressed	Disgraced	Chastised	Excluded
Cut off	Unsupported	Judged		

Afraid

Suspicious	Defenseless	Horrificed	Shaky	Concerned
Cowardly	Hesitant	Scared	Worried	Exposed
Trapped	Petrified	Threatened	Cautious	Panicked
Paranoid	Timid	Apprehensive	Dreading	Tense
Terrified	Anxious	Doubtful	Nervous	Persecuted
Alarmed	Distrustful	Hysterical		

Angry

Aggressive	Detesting	Hostile	Livid	Scornful
Defiant	Furious	Irritated	Resentful	Incensed
Disapproving	Irate	Despising	Contemptuous	Provoked
Mad	Outraged	Bitter	Frustrated	Dismissive
Offended	Critical	Loathing	Indignant	Deploring
Annoyed	Hating			

Disgusted

Repelled	Repulsed	Appalled	Revolted	Nauseated
Disdainful				

Indifferent

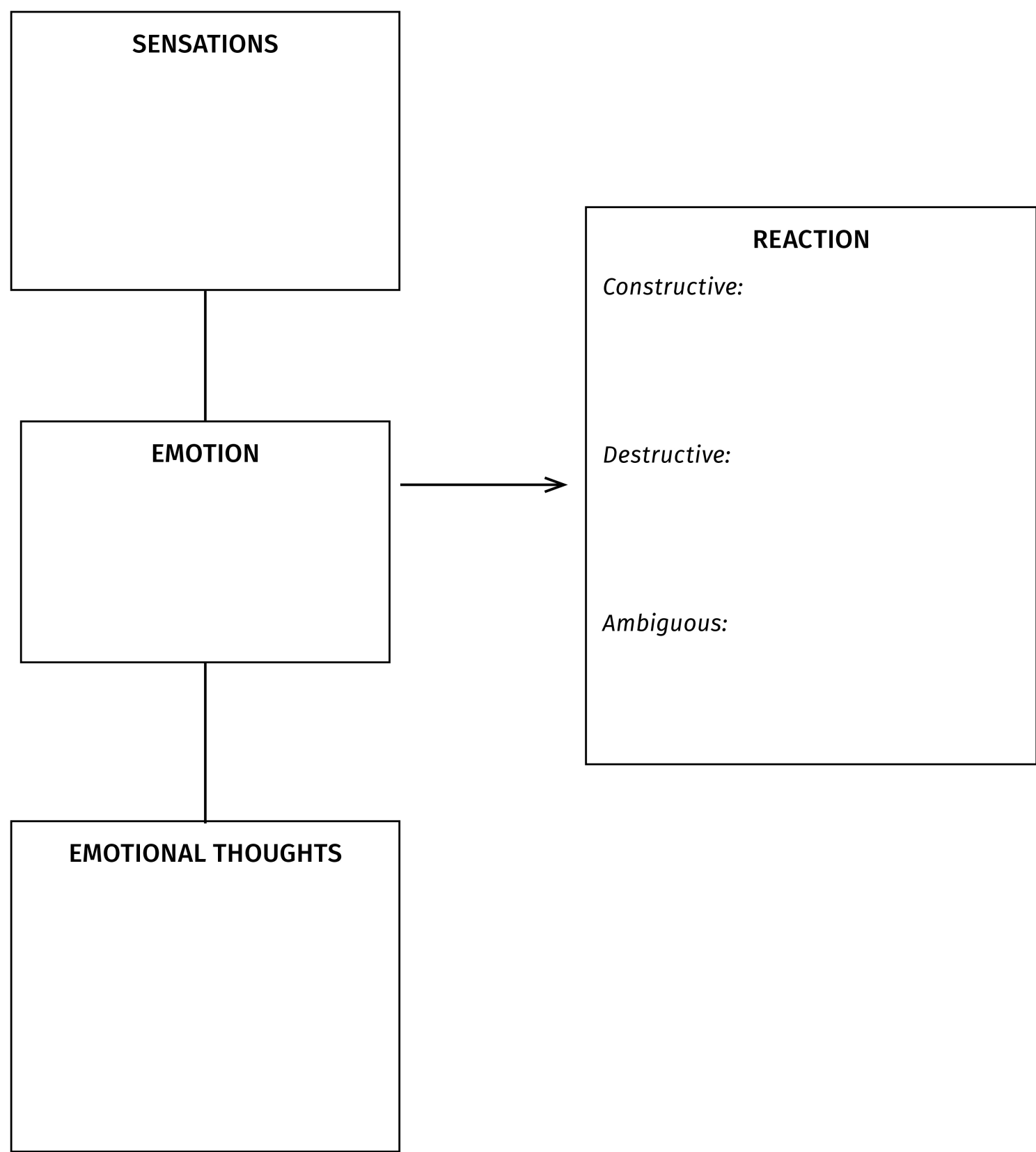
Ambivalent	Apathetic	Bored	Unfocused	Complacent
Flat	Lackadaisical	Numb	Distant	Lethargic
Lazy	Unmotivated	Passive		

Surprised

Amazed	Astonished	Shocked	Startled	Disillusioned
Perplexed				

Write about each emotion that you circled, or focus on ones that feel particularly powerful. What is prompting each emotion? How do these different emotions relate to each other? The more fully you describe your experience, the more you are nurturing greater self-awareness, which can help with having empathy for yourself and ultimately compassionate self-awareness.

Chapter 8: Blank STEAM Diagram



Chapter 8: Clarifying Inner Conflict Chart

Domain	Thoughts	Emotions	My Actions/Reactions
Self			
Other			
Situation			
The other person's actions/reactions:			

Gain Self-Awareness Through STEAM

Despite sincere attempts to change, people often repeat personally destructive patterns. When this happens, gaining a better understanding of yourself (and others) can help you to get unstuck.

In response to difficult situations or problem behaviors, answer the questions below to enhance your self-awareness in five basic domains. You may find it helpful to keep an ongoing journal with your answers so that you can then reflect on them. With persistence, you can begin to see your struggles—and how you respond to them—more clearly.

This process may facilitate change by itself. However, if you tend to respond to your struggles with criticism or in an uncaring way, you may also need to learn to nurture self-compassion. With self-awareness and self-compassion (a combination called compassionate self-awareness), you will feel more motivated—and think more clearly—as you work toward feeling more secure in yourself and your relationships.

Sensations: What do I sense in my body?

(You may want to scan your body from your toes to your head.)

Thoughts: What am I thinking?

I'm thinking that...

(View your thoughts from the outside as an observer.)

Emotions: What am I feeling?

(Identify and “sit with” your feelings.)

Actions: How have I been acting/reacting?

(Notice your reactions to upsetting and positive events.)

Mentalizing: Do I really “get” what’s going on for me and understand what is motivating my actions?

Do I really “get” what’s going on for the other person and understand what is motivating their actions?

To keep your relationship going strong, make it a habit to notice what you appreciate about your partner as well as things they do for you. Just being aware of these things will help you feel good, but making it a habit to tell your partner what you notice will make them feel good, too. The compliments and gratitude can be about anything, such as appreciating how comforting they were when you did not get a promotion, thanking them for accompanying you to a work function, or noting how talented they are in their career.

What are some things your partner has done or traits about them that you appreciate? Write these down and then consider sharing them with your partner.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

If your partner doesn't compliment or thank you much, talk with them about how your relationship lacks this. Let them know that you are working on it, and ask if they would be open to working on it with you. If they are, you might want to commit to each making at least one compliment or statement of appreciation a day for a week. Then check in at the end of the week to see how you did. If it went well, commit to another week. With time, the compliments and thanks will become a habit for both of you.

Active Listening

To feel secure and happy in a relationship, you and your partner must effectively communicate, working as a respectful, caring, and supportive team, even when you disagree. You can create this connection with *active listening*, which involves listening consciously and actively. Active listening can be especially helpful when you are talking through a disagreement. To begin this exercise, choose something about your partner's actions that upsets you but does not make you feel too vulnerable. You can always increase the difficulty level later.

Invite your partner to join you in reading through, and then practicing, the six steps that are outlined below. Because there are so many steps, there is a cheat sheet at the end of this section. Use it as a guide.

1. Speaker

Briefly state the facts, being specific and succinct. While there is nothing wrong in taking detours in general conversation, try to stay on topic for this important discussion.

Next, share how what happened affects you. Feel free to expand on your experience. You want your partner to know all about what you are going through.

You can address displeasure with your partner by explaining your feelings, but do not attack. For instance, rather than seething, "You dirty bastard..." explain "I'm so furious with you for..." While the former will likely prompt your partner to defend or fight back, the latter approach has a better chance of them listening more openly.

2. Listener

Really listen. When you catch yourself being distracted, redirect your focus back to what is being said. Try to see the world through your partner's eyes, including having empathy for how they feel—even if you don't agree or you think they are overreacting. (If your partner is very distressed, show that you empathize but are not lost in it with them. For instance, your eyes might well up, but you would not be sobbing. This restrained, emotionally attuned reaction shows that you can be a safe haven as you comfort them.)

Reflect your understanding. Repeat what they said in your own words and use nonverbal communication to show that you really "get" it. Be open to your partner correcting any misunderstanding.

3. Speaker

Tell your partner what they got right, and then clarify what they misunderstood, or missed. If they understood you totally, say so. If not, you might say something like "You're right that I'm really struggling with what you said to me last night, but you did not fully get why..."

4. Listener

Try again to reflect what you are hearing. If you don't fully understand, ask for clarification.

5. Speaker and Listener

Do steps 3 and 4 as many times as necessary until the speaker feels understood.

6. Listener

Share your empathic emotional reaction toward your partner. Again, the focus here is not on whether you agree with them, but rather that when you see the situation through their eyes, you can empathize. For instance, you might say, “It hurts my heart to see you struggling so much, and I wish I could make it better. Even though I know I can’t do that, I’m really glad I can at least be here for you.” The idea is for you to share your emotional reaction about the speaker’s experience.

The listener’s inner reaction may not be totally empathic. That’s okay, but lead with empathy. Once the speaker feels the listener has empathized with their experience, their defenses will lower and they will be more open to hearing the listener’s experience. If the listener feels the need to share their own experience, you can switch roles.

When you become proficient at active listening, you will each feel safe enough to turn to the other as a safe haven and secure base and to address issues between you.

Active Listening Cheat Sheet

1. Speaker:

- Be specific, succinct, and stay on topic.
- Expand on your feelings
- Explain your displeasure. Do not attack.

2. Listener:

- Pay attention.
- Really listen.
- Show you are listening.
- Reflect your understanding.

3. Speaker:

- Tell your partner what they got right.
- Clarify what they misunderstood or missed.

4. Listener:

- Listen carefully and try again to reflect what you are hearing.

5. Speaker and Listener:

- Repeat steps 3 and 4 until speaker feels understood.

6. Listener:

- Share your empathic reaction toward your partner.

Continue conversation, switching roles, as necessary.

Starting a Difficult Conversation

The Gottman Institute (noted for its research on relationships) found that they could predict whether couples would remain married for at least six years based on the first three minutes of discussing a marital conflict (Carrère and Gottman 1999). This is a truly amazing finding that can benefit you! Those first three minutes also predicted how well couples navigated their discussion by the end of fifteen minutes. The Gottman Institute’s key finding was that *all* of the couples who later divorced began discussions about their conflicts by expressing more negative emotions and fewer positive ones. The exact opposite dynamic was found in stable marriages.

To help you successfully start a difficult conversation, the current exercise provides prompts and suggestions. There are several steps in this exercise, so just focus on one at a time. When you have completed them, you can work to pull this altogether.

Write down the conflict you would like to discuss. Example: *Talking about whether we would have children if married.*

Timing is very important. When do you think that you and your partner can talk calmly about the topic? Example: *Our lazy Sunday mornings.*

State the facts succinctly. Briefly explain the situation or topic. Do not share your reactions yet. Make notes here about what you want to say. Example: *When I brought up the topic a few times, you ignored it and started talking about something else. I let it go.*

Share your thoughts and feeling about the situation or topic. Before you do this, take time to reflect on the domains of awareness. Make some notes here as you work to mentalize yourself and your partner.

Mentalizing Yourself

Example of mentalizing you:

Sensations: Tight chest and stomach

Thoughts: They are trying to avoid this because they don't want kids.

Emotions: Frustrated, afraid

Actions: Asking question about having a kid, then letting it go when they avoid answering.

Mentalizing: I keep letting it go because I'm afraid that this might end our relationship.

Sensations: _____

Thoughts: _____

Emotions: _____

Actions: _____

Mentalizing: _____

Mentalizing Your Partner

This is what you see or imagine going on for your partner. Example:

Sensations: Deep inhale, jaw tensed

Thoughts: They don't want children and don't want to tell me.

Emotions: Annoyed

Actions: Avoiding topic

Mentalizing: They are avoiding the topic because talking about it means ending our relationship.

Sensations: _____

Thoughts: _____

Emotions: _____

Actions: _____

Mentalizing: _____

Express your reactions to the situation or topic. With your STEAM notes in mind, what would you like to express to your partner about your experience? Feel free to expand on this, so your partner can fully understand it. It helps to begin with something positive or points of agreement and then to use *I-statements* as a way to invite your partner to listen. When you start a sentence with “I,” you are telling your partner something about what’s going on for you—opening your world to them. By contrast, when you begin a statement with “you,” you are probably being critical of your partner and closing down communication. Example of an I-statement: *I love you so much and want to spend my life with you, but this topic is really important. I’m frustrated that you keep avoiding it when I bring it up, though I’m also afraid that I’m annoying you. Still, I’m even more afraid of continuing our relationship if you know you don’t want kids.*

State how your partner can meet your needs. Being specific, what can your partner do to meet your needs? How might making these changes help you and your relationship? If you are unsure of what will make you feel better, communicate this and indicate that you’re open to finding a solution together. Example: *If you would talk to me about this, I would feel so much better. Even if we are on a different page, I can promise you that I will at least stop nagging you about this—and we can figure it out together.*

Be open to your partner’s response. Even if there is continued disagreement, hopefully you will feel like a team in trying to bridge the gap. You might want to use active listening when your partner is speaking. You never know—how they respond may be less of a problem than you think! Example: *You’re right. I’ve been avoiding the topic. It’s not because I don’t want children. I actually do want them, but I’m not ready to think that far down the road yet. If you can just give me more time, I think I’ll get there.*

Before going live, review your responses to the questions. You may find it helpful to put an outline of what you want to say in your phone in case your anxiety gets the better of you when you actually begin talking with your partner. Here's a template:

When...(fill in details of event, keeping it brief)

I feel/think...(share your experience using STEAM).

If you...(requested action), *I will...*(ways you will be different).

Our relationship will...(positive changes you expect to see in your relationship).

Taking the time to understand yourself and your partner is extremely important in having constructive conversations. It can help you empathize simultaneously with your own and your partner's position. Then you will be better able to keep the positives of your relationship in mind, even as you clearly address your concerns.

Top Four Tips for Maddening Arguments

During conflicts, use the active listening and co-regulation skills that you’ve practiced in this chapter. Also, do the following.

Slow it down. When people argue, the intensity of their interaction can cause their emotions to overtake the conversation. Instead, slow down your communication so you can truly hear each other out and find a constructive way forward.

Take a break if rising anger threatens to overwhelm the conversation. If you are beyond being able to slow down, or slowing down doesn’t work, pause the argument. However, be sure to set a time to return to the conversation. Keep to your word even if it is just to say you are not ready to talk yet, and then set another time to return to the topic.

Remember that you love each other. To help keep this in perspective, ask yourself, *Do I truly care about my partner? Does my partner truly care about me?* If you cannot answer both with an unequivocal yes, it’s time to take a break. Step away from the conversation until you can answer with a yes and keep that in the forefront of your mind or until you can calmly talk about your deeper relationship concerns.

Always be respectful. Being disrespectful undermines relationships. And being repeatedly disrespectful can be the death knell of a loving connection.

Be Forgiving

When two people are in an emotionally close relationship, they feel free to be themselves and will invariably hurt each other at times. Not on purpose, but still... As someone who is anxiously attached, it can be particularly difficult to forgive your partner because being hurt can set off an avalanche of feelings of rejection and self-recrimination, leading you to lash out at yourself or your partner. Assuming that your partner really cares about you and does not ultimately want to be hurtful, you can benefit from preparing yourself to accept their apology. There are two ways you can do this:

Regularly remind yourself of the ways that your partner demonstrates their love. The more deeply you can accept their love, the easier it will be to see their regret as sincere. As practice, name three ways that your partner has recently shown their caring:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Practice thinking about times when others have forgiven you. Happiness researcher Sonja Lyubomirsky (2008) found that thinking of a time when you were forgiven can help you to forgive. Give it a try. Briefly describe a time when you regretted harming someone else, who then forgave you. How were they affected by your actions? What emotions do you think they felt? What do you think their thoughts and feelings were as they forgave you? How did it feel to you to be forgiven?

How to Rev Up Your Sexual Energy

Have you ever noticed that being physically active increases not just your energy in general but also your sexual energy? Research has shown this to be absolutely true. Engaging in physically arousing and fun experiences can infuse your relationship with romantic and sexual energy.

Rather than relying on your fear of rejection to fan the flames of your passion, choose to get active with a partner who also helps you feel emotionally safe and secure. Sit down with your partner and check off any of the following activities that you both would like to do. And then do them!

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bike | <input type="checkbox"/> Hike | <input type="checkbox"/> Go to climbing gym |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brisk walk | <input type="checkbox"/> Dance | <input type="checkbox"/> Karaoke |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to a concert | <input type="checkbox"/> Kayak | <input type="checkbox"/> Sing at home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play pickle ball | <input type="checkbox"/> Play tennis | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch emotional movie (such as horror, romance) |

List other activities here: _____

If the two of you can't agree on an activity, search for one on the internet. You might find that even the search can generate an interest and excitement about spending time together.