



BARNES COUNSELING COLLABORATIVE, LLC
SUPPORT • GROWTH • HEALING

Healthy Communication Workbook

Conversation starters, communication tips, and reflection exercises to strengthen your relationships.

A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This workbook is intended for educational purposes and personal reflection only. It is not a substitute for psychotherapy, medical care, diagnosis, or treatment. If you are experiencing significant emotional distress or a mental health crisis, please contact a qualified healthcare professional or emergency services immediately.

Using this workbook does not establish a therapist-client relationship with Barnes Counseling Collaborative LLC or Darla Barnes, Ed.D., LPC Associate.

Foundations of Healthy Communication

Healthy communication rests on two habits: listening to understand (not just to respond), and speaking from your own experience rather than blame. A simple structure for the second:

"I feel ___ when ___ happens, because ___. What I need is ___."

Know Your Communication Style

- Passive — avoiding conflict, going along even when it costs you
- Aggressive — expressing needs at the expense of the other person
- Passive-aggressive — indirect expression, sarcasm, or silent treatment
- Assertive — clear, respectful, and honest about needs and limits

Which style do you default to under stress? Which would you like to grow toward?

Conversation Starters for Deeper Connection

- What's something you're proud of this week?
- What do you need more of from me right now?
- What's one way I can support you today?
- What's something that's been on your mind lately?
- When did you feel most connected to me this week?
- Is there anything you've been wanting to say but haven't?

Active Listening Practice

With a partner, family member, or friend: one person speaks for 3 minutes about something on their mind while the other listens without interrupting, then reflects back what they heard before responding. Switch roles.

Repairing After Conflict

- "I want to understand your side."
- "I'm sorry for ____ — that wasn't fair to you."
- "Can we take a break and come back to this in 20 minutes?"

One repair phrase I want to try this week:

Weekly Connection Check-In

Question	Notes
What went well between us this week?	
What was hard?	
One thing to try together next week?	

Closing & Support Resources

Growth takes time, and reflection is itself a meaningful step. If any part of this workbook brought up feelings that feel too heavy to carry alone, please reach out for support.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org (available 24/7).

Crisis Text Line: text TX to 741741 (available 24/7).

Texas Health and Human Services: dial 2-1-1 (option for mental health) to connect with your local mental health authority and crisis services.

For ongoing support, Barnes Counseling Collaborative, LLC welcomes the opportunity to connect. This workbook is a starting point — you do not have to navigate this alone.

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

The concepts, frameworks, and exercises in this workbook draw on the following published sources and established clinical literature. This workbook offers original explanations and exercises inspired by this work; it does not reproduce any source's text, assessments, or materials.

- Gordon, T. (1970). P.E.T.: Parent Effectiveness Training. Wyden.
Origin of the "I-statement" structure used in "Foundations of Healthy Communication."
- Rosenberg, M. B. (1999). Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life. PuddleDancer Press.
Related framework for expressing feelings and needs without blame.
- Alberti, R. E., & Emmons, M. L. (1970). Your Perfect Right: A Guide to Assertive Behavior. Impact Press (now published by Impact Publishers/New Harbinger).
Source for the passive / aggressive / passive-aggressive / assertive communication styles framework.
- Rogers, C. R., & Farson, R. E. (1957). Active Listening. University of Chicago Industrial Relations Center.
Foundational source for the active listening practice exercise.
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). samhsa.gov/mental-health/988
- Texas Health and Human Services, Mental Health and Substance Use Resources (2-1-1 Texas; local crisis lines). hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use