10 Conversations Every Couple Should Have *Before They Need To*

A practical relationship reset for real life.

"Most couples do not need another date-night list. They need better conversations."

GABRIELLA POMARE



BEFORE THE BREAK.

Most relationships do not suddenly break. They change quietly first.

This is a guide to ten conversations worth having before silence becomes distance, before resentment becomes a pattern, and before the relationship you are living in feels unfamiliar.

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A NOTE FROM

GABRIELLA

START WITH ONE.

This is not homework. It is an invitation to stop operating the relationship for long enough to notice the relationship.

01	**CHOOSE**	One conversation
02	**LISTEN**	Twenty uninterrupted minutes
03	**REFLECT**	Understand before solving
04	**RESPOND**	One small change

01 HOW ARE WE, REALLY?

Couples talk constantly. Very little of it is actually about the relationship. Who is picking up the children? What time is dinner? Did you pay the electricity bill? What are we doing Saturday? Can you grab milk? None of those conversations tell you how the relationship is actually going. So start here: “How do you think we are doing at the moment?” You might think you are fine. Your partner might think you are drifting. You might feel disconnected. They might simply feel exhausted. The point is not to decide who has diagnosed the relationship correctly. It is to find out whether you are experiencing the same relationship.

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

Do not wait for a crisis to ask how the relationship is going.

LET'S TALK.

01 / HOW ARE WE, REALLY?

01 What feels really good between us right now?

02 What has felt harder lately?

03 Is there anything you think we have been avoiding?

04 What would make us feel 10% better?

THE FRAMEWORK

NOTICE → **NAME** → **CHANGE**

02 Season or pattern?

THE IDEA

Tired is not always the same as broken. A newborn. A demanding job. Financial stress. Illness. Grief. Renovations. Sleep deprivation. Caring responsibilities. Sometimes two people are not falling apart. They are just absolutely exhausted. The useful question is whether what you are experiencing is a temporary season or an established pattern. A season tends to shift when the pressure shifts. A pattern follows you. If you reconnect on holidays, laugh again when work settles down or feel like yourselves when you finally get time alone, that tells you something. If the same disconnection, resentment or hurt keeps appearing regardless of what is happening around you, that tells you something too.

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

Do not make permanent conclusions from a temporary season.

LET'S TALK.

02 / SEASON OR PATTERN?

01 When did this feeling begin?

02 What else was happening in our lives at the time?

03 Do we feel different when we are less stressed?

04 Are we dealing with a difficult chapter, or repeating the same story?

THE FRAMEWORK

PRESSURE → **SEASON** → **PATTERN**

03 THE RESENTMENT AUDIT

Small resentments rarely stay small when they are repeatedly ignored. One person always gets up with the baby. One career quietly becomes more important. One person remembers the birthdays, appointments, school emails and groceries. One person initiates every difficult conversation. One person keeps saying, “It is fine.” Until it is not. Resentment becomes dangerous when the surface issue starts representing something much bigger: You do not see me. You do not value my time. I am carrying this alone. I am not important to you. The dishwasher is rarely just about the dishwasher once it has become a symbol.

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

Understanding comes before solving. Start with: “I did not realise that felt that way for you.”

LET'S TALK.

03 / THE RESENTMENT AUDIT

01 What are you carrying that I may not see?

02 Is there anything you regularly do that you wish I noticed?

03 Do you feel our life is fair - not necessarily equal, but fair?

04 What do you wish I understood without you having to ask?

THE FRAMEWORK

INVISIBLE WORK → **RESENTMENT** → **REPAIR**

04 WHAT HAVE WE STOPPED DOING?

The disappearance of intimacy is often not dramatic. It is subtraction. At the beginning, you probably did not schedule every interaction. You talked because you wanted to. Touched as you walked past. Sent pointless messages. Asked questions. Made each other laugh. Missed each other.

Then life became more complicated. One small thing disappeared. Then another. Then another. The goal is not to recreate the relationship you had at 25. You are different people now. It is to notice whether something important got lost while you were moving forward.

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

Do not try to go backwards. Bring forward what still matters.

LET'S TALK.

04 / WHAT HAVE WE STOPPED DOING?

01 We used to _____.

02 When did we stop?

03 Do we actually miss it?

04 What is one thing from "us then" that still belongs in "us now"?

THE FRAMEWORK

REMEMBER → **RECONNECT** → **REPEAT**

05

The third presence check

THE IDEA

Sometimes a relationship is between two people - but something else is always in the room. Work. A phone. Social media. Children. A parent. Gaming. The group chat. An ex. Constant busyness. None of these things is inherently bad. The question is whether something else is receiving the emotional energy the relationship used to receive. What gets the best version of you? Where do you go emotionally when you are frustrated with your partner? Who hears about your day first? Sometimes the third presence is not another person. Sometimes it is distraction.

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

Attention is one of the most ordinary - and valuable - forms of intimacy.

LET'S TALK.

05 / THE THIRD PRESENCE CHECK

01 What is the third presence in our relationship right now?

02 What gets our attention when we are together?

03 What do I reach for when I want to avoid connection?

04 What could we keep out of the room for twenty minutes this week?

THE FRAMEWORK

DISTRACTION → **ATTENTION** → **CONNECTION**

06 THE CONVERSATION YOU KEEP HAVING BADLY

Most couples have one topic that somehow ends the same way every time. Money. Sex. Parenting. In-laws. Work. Housework. Alcohol. Phones. Time. You know the conversation. One person pushes. The other withdraws. One gets louder. The other shuts down. Everyone leaves feeling misunderstood. Eventually, couples start believing the topic itself is the problem. Sometimes it is the pattern around the topic. Try a different sequence: Listen. Pause. Reflect. Respond. Listen for what is actually being said. Pause before defending. Reflect on what your partner is asking you to understand. Then respond to the underlying concern, not just the sentence that annoyed you.

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

The softer truth is often underneath the harder sentence.

LET'S TALK.

06 / THE CONVERSATION YOU KEEP HAVING BADLY

01 What happens to each of us when this topic comes up?

02 What am I usually trying to make you understand?

03 What are you hearing that I may not actually be saying?

04 What would make this conversation feel safer or more productive?

THE FRAMEWORK

LISTEN → **PAUSE** → **REFLECT** → **RESPOND**

07 THE CURIOSITY TEST

Familiarity can quietly turn into assumption. You know their coffee order. Their childhood stories. What they will probably order at the restaurant. What they will say before they say it. But the person you met ten years ago does not exist anymore. Neither do you. Long-term love still requires getting to know each other. Curiosity says: I know you deeply, but I have not finished discovering you.

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

Do not let knowing someone well become believing there is nothing left to know.

LET'S TALK.

07 / THE CURIOSITY TEST

01 What are you excited about right now that has nothing to do with our family?

02 What part of your life currently feels most like you?

03 What have you changed your mind about in the last few years?

04 What do you want the next five years of your life to feel like?

THE FRAMEWORK

CURIOSITY → **QUESTION** → **DISCOVERY**

08 The ick - or information?

THE IDEA

Sometimes irritation is carrying information your relationship has not named yet. The way they eat. The joke they have told one hundred times. How they load the dishwasher. The noise they make when they sleep. Suddenly the person whose ridiculous habits once made you laugh is giving you the ick. Sometimes attraction genuinely changes. But sometimes the body is reacting to something the mind has not properly dealt with: unspoken resentment, repeated disappointment, feeling unseen, loss of respect, becoming more parent than partner, or a betrayal that was technically forgiven but never repaired. The useful question is not only "Why does this annoy me?" but "What does this behaviour represent to me?"

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

The thing you are fighting about is not always the thing you are fighting about.

LET'S TALK.

08 / THE ICK - OR INFORMATION?

01 What does this irritation represent to me?

02 When did it start feeling different?

03 Is there a resentment sitting underneath it?

04 What would need to change for me to feel softer toward this person again?

THE FRAMEWORK

IRRITATION → **MEANING** → **REPAIR**

09 LOVE, FEAR, GUILT OR HABIT?

Staying is not a single emotion. Leaving is not either. When relationships become difficult, there are many reasons people stay: love, fear, guilt, children, money, history, identity, comfort, habit, hope, embarrassment. Sometimes all of them coexist. This is not a breakup test. It is a self-awareness exercise. The point is not to judge your reasons. It is to know them. It is difficult to make conscious choices when you cannot tell which voice is driving them.

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

You do not have to act on an answer simply because you were brave enough to name it.

LET'S TALK.

09 / LOVE, FEAR, GUILT OR HABIT?

01 I stay because _____.

02 I am afraid that _____.

03 I would feel guilty if _____.

04 I still love _____.

THE FRAMEWORK

05 I wish we could _____.

LOVE → **FEAR** → **GUILT** → **HABIT**

10 THE FIVE-YEAR QUESTION

If nothing changed between you for the next five years, how would you feel? Do not ask only, “Will we still be together?” Ask what it would feel like if the relationship stayed exactly as it is. Happy? Safe? Content? Disappointed? Lonely? Trapped? Hopeful? The question matters because many of us tolerate something today because we imagine it will eventually become different. Maybe it will. But if you would not accept the current relationship as your future relationship, something deserves attention now. Then make the conversation practical. Choose three things, not thirty.

A THOUGHT TO TAKE WITH YOU

“Be closer” is not a plan. Small, repeatable behaviour is.

LET'S TALK.

10 / THE FIVE-YEAR QUESTION

01 We need more _____.

02 We need less _____.

03 We need to start _____.

04 What is one small behaviour that would make this relationship feel different this week?

THE FRAMEWORK

FIVE YEARS → **WHAT CHANGES?** → **ONE STEP**



THE NEXT
CONVERSATION.

WHAT NOW?

You do not need to overhaul your relationship this weekend. Choose one action and notice what changes.

01 Ask how your partner thinks the relationship is going.

02 Talk about one resentment before it grows.

03 Identify your relationship's third presence.

04 Bring back one thing you used to enjoy together.

05 Have one difficult conversation using Listen, Pause, Reflect, Respond.

06 Ask your partner something you genuinely do not know.

07 Examine what is underneath one recurring irritation.

08 Decide whether you are dealing with a season or a pattern.

09 Talk about what you want the next five years to feel like.

10 Tell your partner one thing you still appreciate about them.

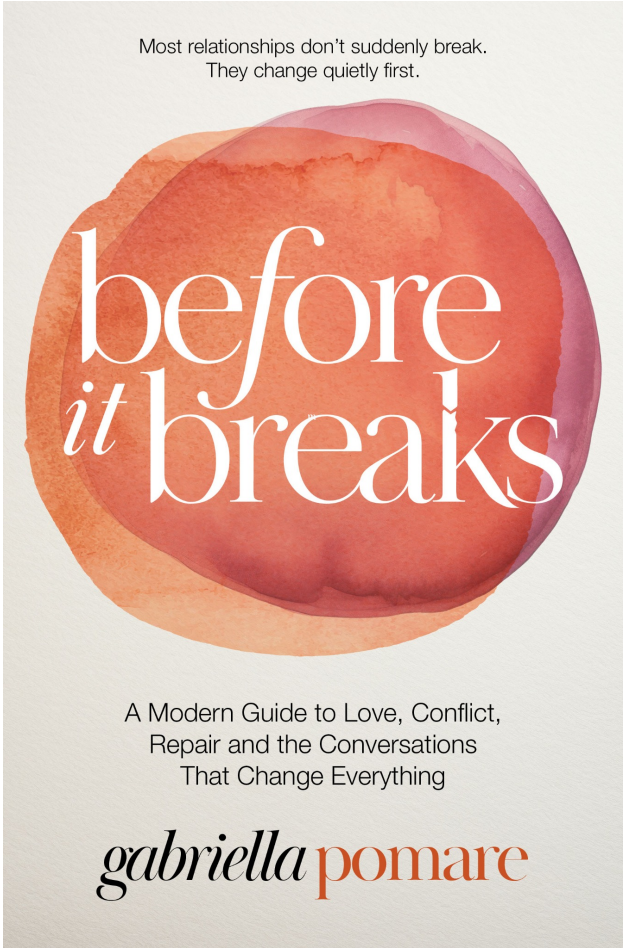
THE AUTHOR.



Gabriella Pomare is an author, podcast host, speaker and award-winning family lawyer whose work explores modern relationships, breakdown and repair.

After more than a decade working with families at breaking point, she became increasingly interested in what happens before: before the silence, before resentment takes hold, and before two people begin to feel like strangers.

COMING 2 MARCH 2027.



BEFORE IT BREAKS

A Modern Guide to Love, Conflict, Repair and the Conversations That Change Everything

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KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING.

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