

## OUR DISCOVERY WITH THE TOOLS OF RCA

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We have found these recovery tools useful for restoring and sustaining commitment, intimacy, and joy in our coupleship.

### **Attending and Sharing at Meetings**

We attend RCA meetings to learn how the program works, and to share our experience, strength, and hope with other couples. In meetings we learn that our struggles and troubles are not unique, and we gain hope and assurance that our own Coupleship can recover and grow. Meetings often bring partners closer and encourage communication. Being honest and vulnerable in front of our partner is frightening but worth it. Many of us believe that our coupleships recover in direct proportion to our willingness to share at meetings.

*“We discovered RCA through an ad, and my partner made the first call. We found our way to our first RCA meeting and have never given up since. We found an abundance of compassionate people who were willing to love us through the trying times we experienced. The process of being held by others and our inching trust with each other brought about amazing results.”*

### **Calling a Meeting of Two**

Either partner can call a Meeting of Two anytime, anywhere. If the other partner agrees, what follows is a typical RCA meeting format even though there are only two people participating. A structure of opening and closing with the Serenity Prayer, and following the Safety Guidelines guarantees being heard and often helps us regain our sense of humor.

*“We have a Meeting of Two every Saturday morning. We pretend that all the people who attend our home group are actually there with us - this keeps us aware that we must speak respectfully. I have a tendency to ‘read’ and react to my partner’s body language, so our chairs are facing away from each other. We use this time to talk about what is going on with us personally and in the coupleship.”*

*“When we started RCA, we always read the Safety Guidelines at the beginning of our Meeting of Two. It helped us remember the ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ of respectful communication! Our old habits were hard to break, but through our persistence we are winning!”*

*“We call our couple meeting a ‘knee to knee’ because there is such a big difference in our sizes. We use chairs that put us on an even plane - eye to eye and knee to knee. This way we can look into each other’s eyes. It’s a deeper level of honesty and a symbol of our equality.”*

*“Before RCA, our ‘Meetings of Two’ were impromptu shouting matches. Right away we made an agreement to hold an RCA-style Meeting of Two daily, reading and discussing the Daily Reflection. The format became second-nature, and today instead of reacting, we respond by using this tool, which invites God into the equation and reminds us to use the Safety Guidelines!”*

### **Calling a Moratorium or “Time-Out”**

When communications break down, a prior agreement to call a “time-out,” also called a moratorium, for fifteen minutes, an hour, or a day can interrupt destructive interaction. We can walk away from each other without walking away from the coupleship. By stating specifically when we will be available to continue discussion, we are showing that we are not abandoning the coupleship or our partner.

*“When things get too heated and we need to walk away, we always commit to each other that we will try again to talk about things at a specific later time, generally within forty-eight hours. This is crucial for us because otherwise we could potentially use the moratorium to justify acting out our dance of avoidance and pursuit. We’ve asked our sponsors and we’ve made progress by seeing the problem as a separate thing; we are two on the same team working to find mutually acceptable changes to help resolve it. We’ve had great success bringing our issues to a therapist who specializes in communication.”*

*“When we came to RCA, we had several ‘insolvable issues.’ No matter how many times we’d talked about it, we hadn’t found a solution. In RCA we learned that many happy couples had such issues. It was freeing to realize that not every situation had to be ‘resolved.’ We began to enjoy other aspects of the relationship even though some issues were unresolved, by agreeing to put an indefinite moratorium on discussing the problems. We recognized that we were powerless over the problem and that repeating the same old arguments was driving us crazy. In Step Three, we turned these problems over to our Higher Power: One day we realized that these problems had simply dissolved.”*

### **Conflict Resolution Contracts and Written Agreements**

We are learning to practice “fair fighting” by developing our own “Conflict Resolution Contract.” We establish respectful conflict guidelines and boundaries that allow the healthy expression of feelings, and we work for resolution of our common problems and concerns.

### **Developing a Support System Within and Outside of RCA**

To help build balance in our coupleship, each day we remember to develop personal relationships with people other than just our partner. Each day we remember to nourish our spiritual growth together, our creativity, and our playful attitudes. Reaching out to other couples outside of meetings allows us to get other perspectives on our problems.

### **“I” Statements**

We use “I” statements such as “I feel hurt” or “I am sad,” rather than “you” statements, such as “You did,” “You are,” “You said,” to help each of us take individual responsibility for our feelings and thoughts, and to avoid blaming others. We do not globalize a conflict, as in “You always” or “You never,” and we keep the focus on current issues, not past issues.

### **Listening and Communicating**

We set aside a time each day for hearing each other’s comments, feelings, and gratitude. Before accepting any major couple commitments, we consult and listen to our Higher Power for guidance.

### **Reading and Working the Steps**

Recovering Couples Anonymous is first and foremost a Twelve-Step program. The principles and techniques that helped restore our lives to sanity and bring a measure of serenity to us as individuals can work for us as couples.

### **Reading Recovery Literature**

Just as daily reading of literature can help keep the focus on our individual recovery, reflecting on our RCA literature can help us focus on our couple recovery. If our partner is in an individual recovery program, reading that recovery literature can help us grow in understanding and compassion for the challenges that they face.

### **Service**

We readily extend help to other couples, knowing that assistance to others adds to the quality of our own relationship recovery. We seek out and accept joint service positions in RCA. We find that doing service together builds our sense of joint participation in our relationship and in its recovery. We get this program when we give it away. Step Twelve is about carrying the message, and the message we carry is a liberating one meant for a lifetime. The spiritual experiences that result affect all of our relationships, and, if we have children, we will be breaking the chains of addiction that have bound our families for generations.

### **Sponsorship**

As part of the surrender process, we admit our weaknesses as individuals and as a couple. We ask others for help, especially our RCA sponsors, and other members in the RCA Program. Acting as sponsors helps bring our coupleship closer. Helping others focus on their relationships can give us perspective on our own coupleship.

### **Using the Safety Guidelines**

By adhering to the Safety Guidelines in our meetings and in our couple communication, we receive and provide the safe environment and nurturing our coupleships need to grow and endure. We affirm our personal rights and agree to act and speak respectfully to others.