

THE RELATIONSHIP REALITY CHECK

See what's actually happening in your relationship - without excuses, assumptions, or endless overthinking. In about 15 minutes.

For the moment when something feels off, but you can't tell whether you're overthinking it, going through a rough patch, or seeing a pattern you need to take seriously.

Use this for one real situation. It can be a new relationship, a long-term partnership, a marriage, a recurring argument, emotional distance, inconsistent effort, a communication problem, or simply a feeling that something has changed.

You are not here to diagnose your partner or guess what is happening inside their head. You are here to separate what you can observe from what you are assuming, identify the pattern, compare the relationship you have with what you actually need, and see what information is still missing.

You do not need perfect certainty to become clearer. You need cleaner information.

Claire Monroe | Dating & Relationship Clarity

BEFORE YOU START

When a relationship matters to you, your brain rarely behaves like a neutral observer. One good evening can make you dismiss a difficult month. One painful argument can make you forget months of stability. An apology can feel like change before anything has actually changed. And a convincing explanation can quietly become a substitute for evidence.

This check is designed to slow that process down. It does not tell you whether your partner is a good or bad person. It does not tell you what they secretly feel. And it does not make the decision for you.

Instead, it asks a simpler set of questions: What happened? What am I adding to it? Is this isolated or repeated? What changed after we addressed it? What do I need? What do I still genuinely not know?

Pick one situation that has been taking up mental space lately. Don't try to evaluate your entire relationship at once.

The situation I want clarity on:

Why is this bothering me now?

What am I most tempted to figure out about my partner's motives?

Keep that last answer in mind. By the end, you may discover that you don't actually need to know their exact motive in order to know what matters to you.

1. WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

Start with observable behavior. Imagine a camera recorded the situation. What would the camera capture? Dates, words, actions, frequency, changes, cancellations, follow-through, tone, time spent together, conversations that happened, promises that were made, and what happened afterward can all be facts.

Interpretation: "He doesn't care about me anymore."

Observation: "For the last six weeks, we have spent one evening a week together instead of our usual three, and he has declined the last two plans I suggested."

Interpretation: "She is avoiding the problem."

Observation: "I brought the issue up twice. Both conversations ended without agreeing on what would happen differently, and we haven't discussed it again."

Write the situation again using only things you could reasonably point to as having happened.

Now circle or mentally flag words such as obviously, never, always, doesn't care, is afraid, is selfish, is losing interest, is manipulating, must mean. Some may eventually describe the situation accurately - but at this stage they are conclusions, not observations.

A useful question: If someone disagreed with my interpretation, what facts would still remain true?

2. FACT, ASSUMPTION, OR EXPLANATION?

Most relationship confusion contains all three. The problem is not having assumptions. The problem is forgetting which category they belong to.

WHAT I KNOW	WHAT I'M ASSUMING	WHAT I'M EXPLAINING AWAY
What I directly observed, heard, agreed to, or can verify.	The meaning, motive, prediction, or story I added.	The reason I use to make behavior feel more acceptable or temporary.

An explanation can be true and still not solve the problem. “He’s under enormous pressure at work” may be accurate. But it does not automatically answer: Can I live well in the relationship as it currently functions? Is there communication? Is there repair? Is this temporary? Is anything changing?

Which explanation have I repeated most often?

If I temporarily removed that explanation, what behavior would I be left looking at?

This isn't about becoming suspicious. It's about making sure compassion doesn't erase information.

3. ROUGH PATCH OR PATTERN?

Every healthy relationship can contain bad weeks, distance, stress, misunderstandings, low energy, conflict, illness, work pressure, family problems, and imperfect communication. A difficult period is not automatically a relationship verdict.

The more useful question is whether the difficulty is an exception inside an otherwise workable relationship - or whether it has become part of the relationship's baseline.

Check what is true in your situation:

- ☐ The issue has happened more than once.
- ☐ We have already discussed it, but the same dynamic returned.
- ☐ I keep waiting for a future version of the relationship to feel okay.
- ☐ The best moments make me forget how the average week actually feels.
- ☐ I frequently explain the same behavior to myself or to friends.
- ☐ I feel temporary relief after a good conversation, but little changes afterward.
- ☐ I am more focused on my partner's potential than on the relationship's current baseline.

How long has this specific issue been present? Be concrete.

What is the average week like - not the best week and not the worst one?

If you removed the best moments and the worst moments, what would the ordinary version of this relationship tell you?

4. WORDS, BEHAVIOR, CHANGE

Words matter. Apologies matter. Explanations matter. Intentions matter. But when you are trying to understand whether a relationship problem is improving, you also need to look at what happens after the words.

Use one recurring issue. Then trace the full sequence instead of stopping at the conversation.

WHAT WAS SAID?	WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?	DID THE CHANGE LAST?

Look for the repair pattern: PROBLEM → CONVERSATION → RESPONSE → FOLLOW-THROUGH → NEW BASELINE.

A sincere conversation is meaningful. But if the same issue repeatedly returns with no durable change, the repetition itself is information. On the other hand, if behavior changes consistently over time, that is information too.

After we address problems, what usually happens in this relationship?

What evidence would I need to see to reasonably say, “Yes, this is actually improving”?

5. STOP ANALYZING THEM FOR A MINUTE

A surprising amount of relationship overthinking is organized around the other person: What do they mean? Why are they doing this? Are they scared? Do they still love me? Are they stressed? Will they change?

Those questions can matter. But they can also keep you busy while a more useful question goes unanswered: What do I need in order for this relationship to work for me?

Choose the areas that matter to this situation:

- ☐ Consistency and reliability
- ☐ Affection / emotional connection
- ☐ Time and attention
- ☐ Honesty and transparency
- ☐ Communication during conflict
- ☐ Respect
- ☐ Sex / physical intimacy
- ☐ Shared responsibility
- ☐ Commitment / future direction
- ☐ Independence and personal space
- ☐ Repair after hurt or conflict
- ☐ Something else: _____

What do I need in this area - stated as clearly and concretely as possible?

What am I currently receiving?

What is the gap between those two answers?

You can understand someone's reasons and still decide that the relationship they are able to offer does not meet an important need. Understanding is not the same thing as agreement, compatibility, or obligation.

6. WHAT IS ACTUALLY STILL UNKNOWN?

Now separate real missing information from questions that require mind-reading. This is where many people get stuck.

Useful unknown: "Does my partner want to work on this with me?"

Mind-reading trap: "What are they secretly feeling every time they pull away?"

Useful unknown: "Are we both working toward the same kind of relationship?"

Mind-reading trap: "If they loved me enough, wouldn't they automatically know what I need?"

What do I genuinely still need to know before I can evaluate my next step?

Which of those questions could be answered by a direct conversation, a clear request, or observing what happens next?

Which questions may never have a perfectly certain answer?

Clarity doesn't require mind-reading. Sometimes the missing information is a conversation. Sometimes it is time plus observation. And sometimes you already have the information - but don't yet know what decision to make with it.

YOUR REALITY SNAPSHOT

Complete these sentences quickly. Don't try to make the answers sound wise or fair. Make them accurate.

The facts I can stand behind are:

The story or assumption I keep adding is:

The explanation I keep using is:

The pattern I can see is:

The need that matters most here is:

The gap between what I need and what is happening is:

The information I genuinely still need is:

If nothing about this changed for the next six months, I would feel:

That last answer is not a command. It is information.

WHAT THIS CHECK CAN - AND CAN'T - DO

If you completed this honestly, you should now have a cleaner picture of the relationship than you had fifteen minutes ago. You may see that you were catastrophizing one isolated moment. You may see a repeated pattern you had been explaining away. You may realize the real issue is a need you have never clearly communicated. Or you may discover that the facts are already clear, but the decision is not.

That distinction matters.

Seeing the pattern and knowing what to do with it are two different skills.

This Reality Check is designed to help you see: facts, assumptions, patterns, repair, needs, gaps, and missing information. It is not designed to choose your next move for you.

Your next question may now sound more like:

- ☐ Do I need a conversation - and what exactly should I ask?
- ☐ Should I give this more time, and what would I be watching for?
- ☐ Is this a boundary issue, a compatibility issue, or a solvable relationship problem?
- ☐ What would meaningful change actually look like?
- ☐ How do I stop changing my standard every time I get reassurance?
- ☐ When do I have enough evidence to make a decision without perfect certainty?

Those are decision questions. And they require a different tool than simply understanding the situation.

For now, keep your Reality Snapshot. The goal is not to make a dramatic decision while emotional. The goal is to stop losing useful information inside excuses, assumptions, fear, and hope.

Stop decoding. Start observing. Then decide from what is actually there.

Claire Monroe

Dating & Relationship Clarity

Important: This workbook is educational and reflective, not therapy or professional mental-health advice. It cannot assess another person's motives or diagnose anyone. If your relationship involves threats, coercion, stalking, physical violence, or immediate safety concerns, prioritize your safety and seek appropriate local professional support.

YOUR NEXT STEP

YOU CAN SEE THE PATTERN. NOW DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH IT.

The Relationship Decision Map

Your Reality Check gave you cleaner information. But seeing what is happening and knowing what to do next are different skills. The next question is no longer “What does this mean?” It is “What decision am I actually facing — and what evidence do I need before I make it?”

THE FRAMEWORK

SEE → SORT → SPEAK → WATCH → DECIDE

- Identify the real decision underneath the overthinking.
- Work out what needs to be said, asked, or clarified.
- Know what evidence to watch after the conversation.
- Choose a next move without waiting for impossible certainty.

The Relationship Decision Map turns the clarity you just created into a practical next move — without telling you whether to stay or leave.

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FOR THE BIGGER PATTERN

DON'T REBUILD YOUR STANDARDS EVERY TIME EMOTIONS GET INVOLVED.

The Relationship Operating System

Sometimes the problem is bigger than one confusing situation. You may know what you need today, then renegotiate it the moment reassurance, chemistry, fear, or hope enters the room. That is not a lack of intelligence. It is what happens when your relationship standards live only in your head instead of inside a system you can return to.

THE FRAMEWORK

KNOW → DEFINE → COMMUNICATE → PROTECT → REVIEW

- Build your Relationship Blueprint: needs, standards, and dealbreakers.
- Map compatibility instead of relying on chemistry alone.
- Create clearer communication, boundaries, conflict, and repair systems.
- Install regular relationship check-ins so you can notice drift earlier.

The Decision Map helps with the decision in front of you. The Relationship Operating System builds the framework you bring into every relationship. Love someone without leaving yourself.

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