

BALANCING
I AND WE

We all know *that one couple* who **does everything together** – he tags along to book club, she comes with to watch the game. They share every leisure activity and rarely attend activities independently. Conversely, you know *that other couple* that seems to **live completely separate lives**—different friends, hobbies, and ways of spending their free time. We can recognize this variety and acknowledge there is no perfect way to balance being together and apart from your partner.

COUPLES EXIST ON A
SPECTRUM BETWEEN
"I" AND "WE"; THE KEY
IS TO STRIVE FOR A
HEALTHY BALANCE
THAT STRENGTHENS
YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

Working toward or maintaining balance between togetherness and separateness requires healthy communication.

Talk to each other about what balance feels like for each of you. **It won't always be equal** and it will change throughout your life together.

Maybe you and your partner are engaged or newly married and you are happy, in love, and feel more connected than ever

– you're more on the “we” end of the spectrum. Perhaps you recently welcomed your third child to the family and you have gone back to work full-time. Your household is hectic and you and your partner rarely get to enjoy quality time – you're more on the “I” end of the spectrum.

Regardless of where you are, address your current balance and take initiative in the direction you and your partner would like to move.

DISCUSSION

// How much time, on average, do you spend with your partner during the week? Does this feel like too much, not enough, or just right? How does the quality of your time together impact the good it brings to your relationship?

// What does it feel like when you have a stretch of time when you barely see your partner? In what ways do you stay connected if you can't spend time with your partner? Do you ever look forward to time apart from your partner?

// What are the benefits to having interests and commitments independent of your partner? Does it help bring you closer to your partner?

// How can the balance of togetherness and separateness improve in your relationship? What do you need to feel close to your partner and still feel independent at the same time?

// Consider judgement – Do you ever feel that your family or friends judge you and your partner for spending too much time together or apart? What does it feel like when you recognize this judgement? Does this impact your decision to spend more or less time with your partner?

CHECK IN WITH CHECKUP

Check in with your Couple Checkup results

by reviewing the *Map of Couple Relationship* section of your report.

Take a look at the map; keeping in mind the center square indicates ideal balance. **Where are you plotted with regard to closeness?**



Read through the descriptions of how you each perceive the level of closeness in your relationship. Do you feel the descriptions accurately reflect how you experience closeness in your relationship?

TAKEAWAY

It's critical to nurture closeness and intimacy in your relationship, but don't forget to maintain your own sense of independence and identity; communicate with your partner to find an appropriate balance for your relationship.

APPLICATION

Start small. If you and your partner decide you are too connected – schedule time to do activities independently, even if just for an hour. If you and your partner decide you are apart too much – make quality time a priority by putting a weekly date night on the calendar or scheduling Saturday morning as time spent exclusively with each other. If you and your partner want something different, try adding scheduled time together and apart.

NEXT STEPS

When your partner brings up an event they want to attend, instead of assuming you should or shouldn't go, have a conversation with your partner about each other's preferences. Decide based on the situation and what is best for a healthy balance of being together and apart.

SECTION SUGGESTION

Consider exploring **Free Time** or **Intimacy** next.