



Relationship Communication Templates

*Clear, low-pressure ways to communicate needs, boundaries,
and repair*

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Important note

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

Many relationship conflicts involving neurodivergent people don't come from lack of care.

They come from:

- different processing speeds
- different emotional timing
- different communication styles
- nervous systems in different states

These templates help you communicate **without having to be perfectly regulated, articulate, or calm.**

Core principles (read once, then skip)

- You don't need the *perfect words*
 - You don't need to explain everything
 - You don't need to resolve things immediately
 - Regulation comes before resolution
 - Clarity protects connection
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1. "I need time" templates

(When you're overwhelmed or dysregulated)

Use when you feel flooded, shut down, or unable to communicate safely.

Short & direct

"I'm overwhelmed and need some time before I can talk properly."

Reassuring

"I'm not withdrawing from you... my system is overloaded and I need time to settle."

With reconnection

"I need a pause right now. Can we come back to this later today / tomorrow?"

If guilt shows up

"I care about this. I just can't do it well in this moment."

2. “This isn’t about you” templates

(When emotions are intense but not relational)

Useful when the other person is taking your reaction personally.

“My reaction is about my nervous system, not about you.”

“I’m activated... not angry at you.”

“I’m feeling a lot, but it doesn’t mean you’ve done something wrong.”

“This is intensity, not intent.”

3. Explaining ND processing (without over-educating)

For moments when differences need naming... gently.

“I process emotions quickly and deeply. It can look big before it settles.”

“I sometimes need time before I know what I feel or need.”

“Tone and timing affect me more than content.”

“I don’t always respond fast... that doesn’t mean I don’t care.”

You don’t owe a neuroscience lecture.

4. Boundary-setting templates (clear, not harsh)

Emotional boundary

“I can talk about this, but not if we’re raising our voices.”

Timing boundary

“I want to talk... just not right now.”

Content boundary

“I’m not able to discuss this in that way.”

Repeat boundary (no escalation)

“I’ve said what I can do. I’m not changing that.”

Boundaries don’t require justification.

5. Repair templates (after conflict, meltdown, or shutdown)

These are for **after regulation has returned**.

Simple repair

“I’m sorry that was hard. My system was overloaded.”

Responsibility without shame

“I wasn’t at my best earlier. I’m not proud of that, and I want to repair.”

Clarifying intent

“I wasn’t trying to hurt you... I was overwhelmed.”

Future-focused

“Next time, I think it would help if we paused earlier.”

Repair ≠ self-punishment.

6. When you’re shut down and can’t speak

For text or pre-agreed messages.

“I’m in shutdown. I’m safe, but I can’t talk right now.”

“I need quiet and no questions for a bit.”

“I’ll reach out when I have capacity.”

Silence with context prevents misinterpretation.

7. Asking for specific support (not mind-reading)

Instead of “I don’t know what I need” spirals.

“What would help right now is reassurance.”

“I need listening, not fixing.”

“Can you sit with me without talking?”

“I need practical help, not emotional processing.”

Specific requests reduce conflict.

8. When something small feels big

(Without minimising yourself)

“This feels bigger in my body than it might look from the outside.”

“I know it seems small, but it hit a sensitive spot for me.”

“I’m not choosing to react strongly... it’s how my system registered it.”

You don’t need to prove that it’s “reasonable” to be valid.

9. When you feel misunderstood or judged

“I’m feeling misunderstood right now.”

“I need curiosity, not correction.”

“Please don’t interpret this as intent.”

“Can you ask me what I mean instead of assuming?”

10. For partners / friends supporting ND people

These are **responses**, not demands.

“We don’t have to solve this now.”

“I’m here... take your time.”

“I’m not going anywhere.”

“Tell me what would help.”

Presence regulates more than logic.

11. Meta-conversation template

(Talking about how you talk)

Use *outside* of conflict.

“It might help us if we agree on how to pause when things get intense.”

“When I shut down, reassurance helps more than questions.”

“Can we plan how we repair after misunderstandings?”

This is where safety is built.

A final reminder

Good communication is not about:

- perfect wording
- constant openness
- emotional neatness

It's about:

- timing
- safety
- repair
- clarity

You are allowed to communicate in ways that **fit your nervous system**.