

Eight Dates Date 1 Trust & Commitment

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Remember

A date is a time set aside for meaningful conversation and connection. Activities like ball games, comedians, movies, or other forms of entertainment can be added to a date, but they cannot be the date itself. If someone else is doing the entertaining, it takes away from the purpose of the date, which is to talk and engage with each other.

Pre Date Homework (Individual) Take 15 minutes to read the **How to Be a Great Listener** booklet at <https://naturalstatecounselingcenters.com/gottman-resources/>

As you read, reflect on yourself rather than your spouse. Pay attention to your own listening habits and consider specific ways you can become a more attentive, patient, and responsive listener in your relationship.

Theme: “Are you there for me?”

Estimated Length: 90–120 minutes

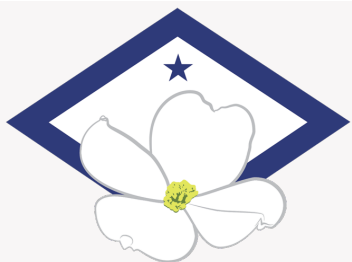
Setting: Neutral and comfortable environment. Phones silenced. No problem-solving outside this structure.

Opening the Date (10–15 minutes)

Purpose Setting

Before beginning, read this aloud together:

Trust is built when partners experience each other as emotionally available, responsive, and dependable. This date is not about perfection or proving loyalty. It is about understanding what helps each partner feel safe, chosen, and emotionally held.



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Ground Rules

- Take turns speaking. Do not interrupt.
- Listen to understand, not to correct.
- No defending or explaining unless asked.
- Emotional honesty matters more than getting it right.

Part 1: Understanding Trust (20–25 minutes)

Individual Reflection (Silent – 5 minutes)

Each partner reflects privately on the following questions before sharing:

- When I say I trust my partner, what do I really mean?
- What behaviors help me feel emotionally safe?
- What behaviors make trust harder for me?

Guided Sharing (15–20 minutes)

Take turns answering. The listening partner only reflects back what they hear.

Prompts:

- Trust feels strongest for me when you...
- I feel emotionally safe when I know you will...
- One thing that weakens trust for me is...

Listener Response:

- What I hear you saying is...
- That makes sense because...
- Thank you for telling me that.

Part 2: Attachment and Emotional Availability (20 minutes)

Discussion Focus



Trust is not just about faithfulness. It is about emotional presence.

Discuss together:

- When I am stressed, I tend to pull toward or pull away.
- When you are stressed, I experience you as...
- One way you show up for me emotionally is...

Key Question:

- When I reach for you emotionally, do you feel I am met or missed?

Avoid problem-solving. This section is about awareness, not fixing.

Part 3: Commitment as a Daily Choice (20–25 minutes)

Exploring Commitment

Commitment is not only staying. It is choosing the relationship daily.

Take turns answering:

- What makes me confident that you are committed to me?
- What does “choosing us” look like in everyday life?
- When have you felt especially chosen by me?

Meaning-Making

Together, complete this sentence:

- In our relationship, commitment means...

Write it down as a shared definition.



Part 4: Repair and Responsibility (15–20 minutes)

Gentle Reflection

Trust grows when partners take responsibility for missteps.

Each partner answers:

- One way I know I have unintentionally hurt trust is...
- One thing I am working on that affects our trust is...

Listener response:

- Thank you for owning that.
- I appreciate your honesty.

No debating facts. This is about impact, not intent.

Part 5: Building Trust Forward (15 minutes)

Trust-Building Requests

Each partner makes one clear, realistic request:

- One thing that would help me feel more secure this week is...
- One way you could show commitment in a small way is...

Requests must be:

- Specific
- Behavioral
- Achievable

Example:

“I feel more secure when you check in with me before late evenings.”

Closing Ritual (5–10 minutes)



Appreciation Exchange

Each partner completes:

- One thing I deeply appreciate about your commitment to us is...

Closing Statement

Read aloud together:

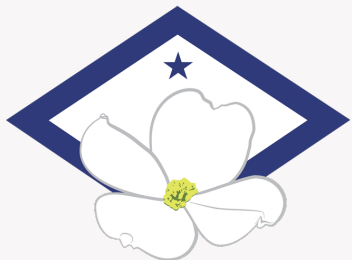
Trust is built one moment at a time. Tonight we chose to listen, to be present, and to move toward each other.

Take-Home Practice for the Week

- Practice turning toward bids for connection.
- Notice moments of emotional availability.
- Keep commitments small and consistent.
- Revisit your shared definition of commitment once this week.

Therapist Tip

If strong emotions arise, slow the conversation, validate feelings, and return to listening. Trust grows when couples feel understood, not when issues are resolved quickly.



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